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EXPLORING EMPOWERMENT

A NEW CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
FOR THE
STUDY OF EMPOWERMENT IN PRACTICE

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FEBRUARY 1999

Thesis for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores empowerment through a qualitative research study of eight Scottish voluntary and community sector projects, all of which shared a stated objective of empowerment. The research involved analysis of existing empowerment literature, in-depth interviews with key 'commentators' in the selected projects, documentary analysis and the observation of critical processes.

The thesis does not seek to evaluate the effectiveness of empowerment practice, but rather proposes a new framework for critically exploring empowerment. It integrates theoretical, conceptual and empirical findings from the literature and from practice to identify and unpack empowerment's dimensions, tensions and contradictions. The proposed framework for examining empowerment is represented as a 'filebox' of four sections, reflecting four themes of empowerment - its foundations, methods, critical factors and conceptualisations. Each of these sections contains a number of 'filecards' which represent different dimensions of empowerment. Each dimension is explored via a summary, a list of key distinctions and a collection of critical questions.

This new approach to examining empowerment suggests that, rather than being denied or over-simplified, the complexity and diversity of empowerment should be celebrated and indeed championed.

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In alphabetical order (refers to organisation representing at time of interview):

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

"I don't want to sound too disillusioned here! Yes, my philosophy about empowerment is still in place, but it's all very well to talk about it - it's how you actually put it into place that I'm not quite sure I've got the answers to. I'm not quite sure where the answers are, if anybody's got them. It sounds great and I'm sure it looks good, because we've all spent years reading about empowerment. But I don't know how easy it is. ... If anybody has the answer to how we actually empower these communities and how people stay with it, it would be good!" (SW&H Interview).

This comment by a development worker encapsulates many of the current issues surrounding empowerment. People understand theories of empowerment, and want to use empowerment as an approach or achieve it as a result, however they are struggling to link theory with practice, or rather to make sense of the concept as it applies to their concrete work.

Such confusion remains despite a rush of publications on empowerment over the past ten to fifteen years. Empowerment remains vague, complex and shrouded in "conceptual confusion" (Simon 1990 p27), with those seeking to better explain it tempted to provide "reductionist and simplistic" analyses (Humphries 1996 preface):

"In this literature there is an absence of any context for discussions of empowerment, or any questions as to why empowerment is claimed by advocates right and left of the political spectrum, or as to its popularity at this historical moment. What is on offer is a range of prescriptions for empowerment, cookbooks for how to achieve it" (Humphries 1996 preface).

Such "cookbooks" clearly have their attractions to the confused observer or practitioner, but they suffer from a notable absence of theory and critical analysis, and tend to assume that empowerment must be unquestionably good for, and desired by, everyone (Humphries 1996). Developing this cookbook analogy further, this approach restricts the comparison of practice to pre-existing recipes, and fails to predict what will happen with a different combination of ingredients, people, equipment and conditions (after McManus et al 1993).

The need to critically unpack the concept of empowerment has intensified with its continuing popularity. While other buzzwords come and go, empowerment has remained in vogue, in fact increasing its profile across public, private, voluntary and community sector discourse and practice. For example the 1997 British Sociological Association conference on power and resistance had a concentration of papers on empowerment (BSA 1997), and Age Concern has named 1998 its Year of

Empowerment. If anything, the flood of empowerment-related publications is rising rather than falling each year, ensuring "the rhetoric of empowerment drops on our heads at every turn like confetti, its mention directly or by implication *de rigueur* in articles, books and political statements" (Humphries 1996 p1). Empowerment practice too, represented in approaches such as user involvement and community stakeholding, is being described as more "rising tide" than "passing fad" (Robson et al 1997 p2).

This complex background of ongoing confusion alongside continuing popularity suggests a need for a new approach to empowerment research, with three main aims.

First, to integrate theoretical, conceptual and empirical findings from the empowerment literature with what is actually going on in practice. This is necessary to help reverse the trend whereby the lessons of practice are ignored by theorists, reflecting Stewart and Taylor's (1995) complaint that "the same issues about lack of power and about the limited access for community interests to power appear and reappear in the literature" (p63).

Second, to unpack empowerment by exploring, rather than evaluating, the concept. This avoids the limitations of measuring empowerment practice against value-driven ideal types, and instead allows for the identification and in-depth exploration of empowerment's dimensions and dichotomies, tensions, contradictions and ambiguities.

Third and finally, to create a conceptual framework for exploring empowerment practice across its many settings, thus allowing researchers and practitioners to critically explore the complexities and intricacies of empowerment in a flexible yet structured way.

To meet these aims, this research studied eight Scottish projects, all of which shared a stated objective of empowerment and illustrated the concept in practice.¹ These projects represented a range of user groups and approaches to empowerment, and all were situated within the voluntary or community sectors. This research did not therefore explore empowerment in all contexts, but rather focused on a range of practice within one context (broadly community development) and within a specific type of organisation (small scale, local and generally time-limited). A wealth of

¹ These eight projects are identified in the earlier Acknowledgements and listed at the end of this Introduction (see Notes and Abbreviations, pp16-17). Each project is outlined in more detail in Appendix One: Project Summaries, pp300-312.

evidence emerged from this research about both the advantages and challenges of working in such initiatives, however discussion of these has necessarily been limited to issues directly linked to empowerment (as opposed to wider) practice.

Qualitative and emergent research methods were used to triangulate in-depth interviews with key project participants with documentary analysis and the observation of critical processes. Importantly here, this approach allowed both perceptions and actions to be explored, reflecting the tension between what people think about empowerment and what they do.²

A Guide to this Thesis

Like Stewart and Taylor's (1995) review of urban regeneration, this thesis "is not a good practice guide or a manual to empowerment" (p1), nor does it seek to "confirm the answers, or provide a prescriptive road map" (Labonte 1991 p21). Rather it seeks to answer six critical questions:

- why is there a need to unpack empowerment?
- where has empowerment come from and why is it so popular in practice?
- what practical methods are used to promote empowerment?
- which factors appear most critical in 'making or breaking' empowerment practice in the projects?
- what does its practice suggest about how empowerment is conceptualised?
- how can such conceptualisations be brought together to unpack empowerment in a critical and structured way?

The thesis is divided into six parts, reflecting each of these questions. Note that throughout this thesis, the literature is discussed alongside research findings from the projects, and thus there is no separate literature review. This approach was chosen to allow for a more critical, detailed and ongoing engagement with the empowerment literature, with writers' theories, arguments and experiences acting as valuable evidence in unpacking the concept.

PART ONE: UNPACKING EMPOWERMENT outlines the basic research problem and reviews the methods used in the research. It begins with **Empowerment: Definitions and Concepts**, which outlines existing conceptual models. **Theories of Power and**

² A detailed review of the research methods is outlined later in (1.3) Researching Empowerment (pp36-54).

Empowerment then reviews the strengths and weaknesses of previous attempts to define and theoretically model both power and empowerment. The qualitative and emergent methods and tools used in **Researching Empowerment** are then discussed, emphasising the need to promote an exploratory (rather than evaluative) approach.

PART TWO: THE FOUNDATIONS OF EMPOWERMENT provides the background to empowerment's popularity as a concept and a practice. The **Roots of Empowerment** first identifies its historical and philosophical foundations, and maps its popularity by examining political and ideological trends. The multi-layered settings of practice are then reviewed in **Contextualising Empowerment**. The final chapter focuses more directly on the **Aims of Empowerment**, discussing why empowerment is chosen as an approach and specifically what expectations are held.

PART THREE: METHODS OF EMPOWERMENT PRACTICE reviews three different ways in which projects attempt to promote empowerment. This begins by exploring who is targeted in empowerment practice in **Focusing Empowerment**. The use of terminology as practice is then discussed in **The Language of Empowerment**, before seven different **Types of Involvement** are identified, exploring users' (and others') roles.

PART FOUR: CRITICAL FACTORS IN EMPOWERMENT PRACTICE seeks to identify what makes or breaks attempts to empower. **Preconditions for Empowerment** are first outlined, before reviewing factors which, in turn, assist and impede practice, namely **Bases of Power: Resources for Empowerment** and **Blocks and Barriers in Empowerment**.

PART FIVE: CONCEPTUALISING EMPOWERMENT identifies four key conceptual dimensions of empowerment in practice. **The Form of Empowerment** draws the critical distinction between process and product, before **Steps and Stages in Empowerment** are discussed, including the possibility of empowerment reversal. **Dynamics of Empowerment** draws out the different power relationships which are apparent in practice, whilst **Identifying Empowerment** outlines the ways in which participants seek evidence of empowerment and its impact.

PART SIX: A NEW CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF EMPOWERMENT concludes this thesis by drawing together the key dimensions of empowerment which emerged in this research and which thread through this thesis. A new conceptual framework is outlined which provides a structure for the critical exploration of empowerment practice, identifying contrasting dimensions of practice alongside their key

distinctions, and asking critical questions of each. Part Six concludes by noting that the complexity and diversity of empowerment should be welcomed and accepted rather than denied or over-simplified. The practical application of the new conceptual framework should result in a clearer and more honest understanding of empowerment-based projects' aims, methods and key challenges, leading to more creative, insightful and effective practice.

APPENDIX ONE: PROJECT SUMMARIES provides an outline of each of the eight projects which participated in this research, whilst **APPENDIX TWO: EXAMPLE OF AN INTERVIEW SCHEDULE** illustrates a typical interview guide used during the fieldwork. **APPENDIX THREE: REFERENCES** lists the literature cited throughout.

Terms of Empowerment: The Terminology Used

"... there is no consensus on the best terminology" (Taylor et al 1992 p2).

Before this Introduction ends with a list of notes and abbreviations, the terms used in this research are first briefly explained, supporting Morse's (1991) assertion that "how we refer to those who assist us in our research inquiry is not a trivial matter" (p403).

The eight **projects** are uniformly referred to as such, although only five called themselves projects (the remainder were a group, a foundation, and a coalition). This term was chosen for its simplicity and its reflection of the initiatives' temporary and/or specialised nature. Those involved in the projects are termed **participants**, which includes managers, volunteers, workers and project users, as well as the more arms-length evaluators and founders.

Those undertaking paid employment in projects are referred to as **project workers**, chosen as a clear, generic term which covers diverse jobs and ranks. Other terms used in the literature were considered but rejected. For example Wilcox (1994) refers to "practitioners", which does not necessarily differentiate workers from other active participants, whilst Barnes et al (1996) use the term "official" to embrace managers, practitioners and politicians together, which in their own words is "rather crude" (p13).

Those using projects are simply named **project users**. This was chosen because of its relative neutrality and ability to incorporate projects' diverse user groups, which included 'students' (SCL), 'trainees' (SAMH), 'members' (LCDP) and 'patients',

'relatives' and 'staff' (EP). The naming of this group is certainly the most contentious, and within the projects and the literature there is no uniformity or agreement on a term of preference. For example Clarke and Stewart (1992b) refer to "the public" and "the citizen", arguing that empowerment involves more than service provision or consultation. Wilcox (1994) differentiates "stakeholders", who actually have an interest in participation, from the wider community. Taylor et al (1992) prefer terms such as "user", "recipient" and "survivor" for being explicit about power relationships, unlike terms such as customer and citizen. Rees (1991) refers to "clients" for the same reason, although he claims this is not ideal. Barnes et al (1996) refer to "users" with "some reservations" (p9), as not all actively choose to use services and some argue the term has connotations with drug misuse (some commentators also made this latter point). However they prefer its neutrality to more loaded terms such as survivor, consumer or customer. Indeed in their user guide to advocacy and empowerment (undated), the Scottish Association for Mental Health argue that "consumer" is a "term used by services about people - not a term people use of themselves".

Those who took part in the interviews are referred to generically as **commentators**, reflecting their specialist knowledge, practical expertise and informed perceptions. Terms such as 'interviewee' were considered too formal to reflect what was essentially a conversational, informal interview style, whilst 'informant' was felt to be reminiscent of secretive discussions with hidden sources, which again did not reflect the open nature of the interviews (whereby project participants knew who was being interviewed and why).³

Finally the term **writers** is used where it is necessary to distinguish views on empowerment in the literature from those of the project participants.

Notes and Abbreviations

Finally here, please note that findings relating to the projects are sourced in three different ways, reflecting the three types of evidence used: interviews, documents and observation. Each of the eight projects is represented by an abbreviation (as outlined below in Table 1) when referring to excerpts from these sources. Thus sources are given such as SYAP Interview, DCHP Document and EP Fieldnotes (for material from observations). Project documents are referenced in full in accompanying footnotes, rather than being listed with the other references in Appendix Three.

³ A full list of the commentators is included in the earlier Acknowledgements (pp6-9).

Table 1: Project Names and Abbreviations

Project Name	Abbreviation Used
Drumchapel Community Health Project	DCHP
The Empowerment Project	EP
The Foundation for Community Leadership Development	FCLD
Lothian Coalition of Disabled People	LCDP
Scottish Association for Mental Health Advocacy & Empowerment Group	SAMH
Second Chance Learning	SCL
Stirling Women and Health Project	SW&H
Stirling Youth Action Project	SYAP

The commentators' quotations have been anonymised by sourcing them only to the name of their respective project (such as 'LCDP Interview'). Individually numbering the commentators was not felt to provide the necessary level of anonymity and was therefore rejected.

PART ONE

**UNPACKING
EMPOWERMENT**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Part One of this thesis identifies the need to unpack empowerment, outlining the key research problem and reviewing the methods used in the research.

Chapter 1.1 explores existing definitions and conceptualisations of empowerment. This highlights their contribution to understanding empowerment, before more critically identifying their overall failure to acknowledge and reflect the concept's tensions and contradictions. This chapter ends by identifying the gaps in existing understanding that this research sought to address.

Chapter 1.2 highlights the critical role of theories of power in unpacking empowerment. Existing theories are essentially competing, and thus there appears to be no ideal theory of power from which to develop theories of empowerment. However existing theories retain a critical role here by offering a conceptual structure of key dimensions which assist understanding of empowerment.

Finally here, Chapter 1.3 reviews the methods used to research empowerment. Fundamentally, this involved developing an methodological approach to promote the exploration, rather than evaluation, of empowerment. This chapter outlines the selection of qualitative and emergent methods, discusses the sampling of projects and commentators, reviews the multiple research tools (namely qualitative interviews, documentary analysis and observation), briefly outlines processes of analysis and interpretation, and questions how far this research could be called 'empowering' in itself.

1.1 EMPOWERMENT : DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTS

Introduction

This first chapter explores existing definitions and conceptual models of empowerment. This exploration demonstrates that, whilst such attempts to define and conceptualise do reflect empowerment's complexity to some extent and do highlight a number of its key themes and dimensions, overall they offer only limited insight. Consequently those practising and researching empowerment are left struggling to make sense of the concept in practice. This chapter goes on to identify the ways in which this research aimed to address such limitations, most critically through choosing to explore rather than evaluate empowerment practice.

Defining Empowerment

"Empowerment is a little bit like obscenity; you have trouble defining it, but you know it when you see it" (Rappaport 1985 p17).

An appropriate start for any exploration of empowerment may appear to be a definition of the concept. Indeed, Servian (1996) complains that the terms power and empowerment are "rarely defined by those people that use them" (p5).

Despite such complaints, a review of the empowerment literature in fact identifies a plethora of definitions, many of which are dispersed throughout this thesis. Mitchell's (1989) prediction that the concept of empowerment will be "variously construed" (p14) through the 1990s certainly appears to have come true. Yet despite (or perhaps because of) these many definitions, there remains little agreement as to what actually constitutes empowerment. While some definitions are "confused" by empowerment's many meanings (Barnes and Walker 1996 p379, criticising the Audit Commission), simpler attempts are accused of being "bland" and "glib" (Whittell 1993 p3).

The more simplistic interpretations are based on dictionary definitions of empowerment, which offer just two general meanings: authorising and enabling. The former meaning is largely legalistic and is dated back to 1654 by the Oxford English

Dictionary (1989). This embodies giving or delegating power; authorising; commissioning; licensing and investing legal or formal power or authority¹:

"Empower, empowers, empowering, empowered: If someone is empowered to do something, they have the legal authority or power to do it; a formal word" (Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary 1987).

Fewer dictionaries offer the second meaning of enable; permit; make possible; give ability to; facilitate; give faculties to; or make powerful.² Donelan (1995) categorises these two general meanings as political (to give power to) and practical (to make able), which is a useful distinction but reflects little of the richness, complexity and contemporary usage of the language of empowerment and the concept's diverse application. Such definitions additionally fail to solve the "difficulty in defining empowerment ... that it takes on a different form in different people and within different contexts" (Gibson 1991 p355).

The empowerment literature appears restricted to four limited approaches to definition. In the first, no definition is given and debates around empowerment remain unrecognised. Second, no definition is proposed, although the confusion around empowerment and its multi-dimensionality is recognised. Third, empowerment is simply defined in a one-dimensional way. Finally, empowerment is defined within a limited multi-dimensional model. Each of these consequently fails to address the very complexity of empowerment which this research sought to explore and clarify, with very few exceptions where single definitions are seen as neither attainable nor helpful and the multi-dimensionality of empowerment is recognised (see for example Gibson 1991; Humphries 1996; Rappaport 1984).

Despite such criticisms, the attraction of a single, user-friendly and 'watertight' definition of empowerment is of course clear. For example empowerment research based in community psychology tends to define empowerment before applying a range of models and frameworks to scientifically and empirically measure the concept (as published in the American Journal of Community Psychology by writers such as Chavis, Kieffer, Rappaport, Wandersman, Zimmerman et al). Such an approach offered an initial model for this research, which considered the creation of a sole 'watertight' definition of empowerment against which practices of empowerment,

¹ The Collins English Dictionary: 2nd Edition (1986); The Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English: 2nd Edition (1963); Chambers English Dictionary 1988; Chambers 20th Century Dictionary 1959; The Oxford English Dictionary: Second Edition (1989).

² The Collins English Dictionary: 2nd Edition (1986); Webster's Third New International Dictionary 1961; The Oxford English Dictionary: Second Edition (1989); Roget's Thesaurus 1962.

disempowerment and non-empowerment could be measured or evaluated within a Scottish community development setting (Murray 1993).

However, a deeper delving into the literature, contact with practitioners and academics working with empowerment,³ and some initial conceptualising of empowerment highlighted the limitations of this evaluative approach, not least that "imposing definitions is an exercise of power which mystifies and hinders people's thinking for themselves" (Rees 1991 p48). This research therefore shifted towards an exploratory approach which would acknowledge, and indeed celebrate, empowerment as "a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon" (Humphries 1996 preface), rather than seek to limit its definition. Contrary to Osborne's (1994) complaints that empowerment's multiple definitions are "for the academic and the research worker ... undoubtedly problematic" (p62), this research seeks to exploit this multi-dimensionality in search of rich conceptual and practical insight.

This research therefore shifted away from evaluating empowerment practice against a set definition towards exploring the diverse ways in which empowerment is conceptualised in practice, responding to Seidman and Rappaport's (1986) call for a new "critical mind set" to reframe the concept.

Conceptualising Empowerment

This research was not new in seeking to conceptualise empowerment, although there are claims that despite its popularity, the concept remains "ill-defined and scantily theorised" (Morley 1995 p2; also Price 1990). Indeed the theoretical modelling of complex concepts in general is well-established, with for example the 1970s and 1980s witnessing similar attempts to construct classifications and models of participation, mostly following Arnstein's (1969) ladder of citizen participation. For example, Hallett (1987) refers to additional participation typologies by Matthews (1976), Van Til and Van Til (1970), Windle and Cibulka (1981) and Yates (1972). However, as with its definitions, existing conceptual models and frameworks of empowerment are limited in scope, falling into three broad categories.

³ These were the General Contacts, as listed in the Acknowledgements and discussed in (1.3) Researching Empowerment (Selecting a Sample, Identifying Projects, pp40-2).

First are one-dimensional models which recognise empowerment as a multi-level concept, most being heavily influenced by Arnstein's ladder of participation (1969).⁴ These include Wilcox's (1994) ladder of effective participation, which ranks participation, involvement, empowerment and partnership, and Zimmerman and Rappaport's (1988) multi-level ranking of collective participation, perceived control and psychological empowerment. Although this one-dimensionality offers limited flexibility, these multi-level models do at least recognise empowerment as staged rather than 'all or nothing'.

Second are two-dimensional models of empowerment, such as Barnes and Walker's (1996) comparison of bureaucratic and empowerment service models, and Martin's (1996) model for empowering parents in schools. These models suffer from their tendency to categorise practice in a mutually exclusive 'either/ or' manner, which fails to recognise the blurring of theoretical distinctions which inevitably accompanies practice. For example Barnes and Walker's (1996) model (replicated below) suggests that bureaucratic approaches promote dependency, whilst empowerment approaches promote interdependency and autonomy. The danger here is the appearance of a simplistic, dichotomous construction, whereby organisations are either 'bad' and bureaucratic, or 'good' and empowerment-based. In practice of course, organisations have elements of each approach, and even these writers note that their two models "in practice ... are frequently confused" (p379).

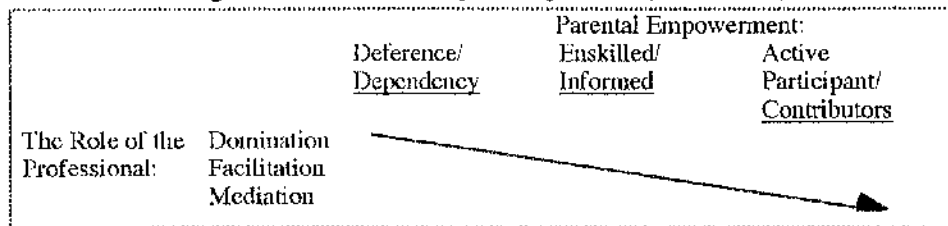
Figure 1: Service Organisation Models (Barnes and Walker 1996 p379)

Bureaucratic	Empowerment
service/ provider oriented	user oriented
inflexible	responsive
provider-led	needs-led
power concentrated	power sharing
defensive	open to review
conservative	open to change
input oriented	outcome oriented

Such two-dimensional attempts to conceptualise empowerment also tend to assume causality through their unidirectionality. Martin's (1996) model for empowering parents (reproduced below) illustrates this limitation, outlining a prescribed combination of roles. This, for example, assumes that mediating professionals only work with parents who are active and contributing, whilst in reality this role could also be performed with parents seeking deferent or dependent relationships.

⁴ Arnstein's ladder is illustrated and discussed in (3.3) Types of Involvement (Typologies of User Involvement, pp137-9).

Figure 2: A Model for Empowering Parents (Martin 1996)



These one- and two-dimensional models have some uses and contain some insight, but overall they offer a limited reflection of the complexity and richness of debates surrounding empowerment through linear and unidirectional interpretations.

Third are multi-dimensional models, which initially appear more helpful. These recognise that individuals actively choose different power strategies over contexts and time, and "are multi-positioned having different co-existing identities" (Carabine 1996 p30). For example Prestby et al (1990) suggest empowerment is both multi-level (across individuals, organisations and communities) and multi-dimensional (as intrapersonal, social, behavioural, and political). Labonte's (1991) "empowerment continuum" (p22) consists of five overlapping circles (personal empowerment, small group development, community organisation, coalition advocacy and political action), with insight focusing on "the dynamic, fuzzy nature of their intersections" (p22). Wolff's (1987) three-dimensional cubic model has four targets (e.g. individual, group), four purposes (e.g. prevention, development), and two methods of intervention (direct professional and indirect alternative). Florin and Wandersman (1990) identify dimensions of process, structure, values, and domain (or context). Further multi-dimensional models are framed around questions, such as Stewart and Taylor's (1995) four "dimensions of empowerment" (p13) which highlight processes (how?), degree (how much?), focus (where?) and ownership (who?). South Lanarkshire Council's "wheel of empowerment" (Davidson 1998 p15) consists of four participation techniques, each containing three segments (here in brackets): information (minimal communication, limited information, good quality information); consultation (limited consultation, customer care, genuine consultation); participation (effective advisory body, partnership, limited decentralised decision-making); and empowerment (delegated control, independent control, entrusted control). Davidson (1998) argues that this wheel flexibly reflects "the aims at any particular point in the participation process" (p14).

Both the multi-level classifications and multi-dimensional models outlined here bring some clarity to the "slippery concept" (Matthews 1989) of empowerment. However they effectively oversimplify the concept, failing to clarify situations whereby

individuals or organisations conform to more than one level, dimension, or pre-determined combinations. Such models are also commonly limited by their desire to fit all the dimensions into a single, one-dimensional graphical image, such as a ladder (Arnstein 1969; Wilcox 1994), cube (Wolff 1987), table (Martin 1996), wheel (Davidson 1998) or a series of circles (Labonte 1991).

Overall existing conceptual models of empowerment raise three key problems which this research seeks to address.

First, theoretical models and frameworks tend to be developed independently of what is actually happening in practice. As Rees (1991) warns, empowerment is replacing older concepts with little examination of "the interdependence of policy and practice" (p4), calling for a greater integration between theory and practice. Mondros and Wilson (1994) too note that practical and theoretical texts rarely overlap. There are few exceptions, such as Keenan and Pinkerton's (1988) exploration of the conflict between an empowering personal ideology and the maintenance of power differentials in professional practice. It is this very interface between values, theories and practice with which those working with empowerment continually struggle, as noted in this thesis' opening quotation and in another commentator's complaint that "In theory it's fine but putting it into practice is a different kettle of fish" (SYAP Interview). Thus "Reconsideration of empowerment needs to go beyond intellectual discourse" (Clarke and Stewart 1992b p8), or as Herd (1995a) warns:

"We can get lost in theories, policies, polemics and posturing at the expense of remembering that real people live with the consequences of the decisions which service systems and policy frameworks effect" (p28).

Second, findings from research and practice risk being slotted into existing restrictive empowerment models. Thus processes and outcomes are measured or evaluated against predetermined categories, rather than allowing the findings to determine the model in a more exploratory way. For this reason, Stewart and Taylor (1995) warn that their model offers "no 'right way' of empowering that can be constructed from these dimensions" (p18). Whilst existing classifications and models provide structures "against which to assess the value of different approaches" (Taylor et al 1992 p1), one must question the usefulness of this approach. Rappaport (1981) suggests that many areas of life are paradoxical, and researchers should seek to unpack such paradoxes rather than find one 'perfect' solution to complex and shifting problems. Seidman's (1986) similarly advises that researchers should stop seeking a correct theory or single truth, and recognise a range of ways of thinking through the use of conceptual frameworks based on questioning. Thus an approach is required which allows empowerment to be acknowledged as 'both ... and ...', rather than as 'either ... or ...'.

Third, empowerment research and practice tends to remain uncritical and atheoretical. Very few writers appear to critically examine the concept, although there are notable exceptions such as Baistow's (1994) discussion of empowerment's paradoxically liberatory and regulatory roles; Berry's (1988a; 1988b) critique of empowerment's links with consumerism; Rappaport's (1981; 1984; 1985; 1987) discussion of empowerment's contradictions and controversies; and others' attempts to critically question empowerment's current popularity in policy (Colenutt and Cutten 1994; Humphries 1996). In practitioners' texts there are even fewer critiques of empowerment as a technique, although again there are exceptions (e.g. Duncan and Cribb 1996; Gracc 1991; Gruber and Trickett 1987; Keenan and Pinkerton 1988).

The research gaps are therefore clear. There is a need for an approach to empowerment which first is rooted in practice; second is exploratory not evaluative; and third offers critical and conceptual insight.

This research consequently sought to unpack empowerment through a critical exploration of theory and practice. The concept's emerging dimensions are identified and discussed throughout the following chapters, which in turn explore the four themes of empowerment's foundations (Part Two), methods of practice (Part Three), critical factors (Part Four) and varying conceptualisations (Part Five), before finally bringing all of these together in the new conceptual framework proposed in Part Six.

The gradual emergence of this conceptual framework is fully discussed in Part Six. However it is important to note here that key themes and dimensions of empowerment were first tenuously identified through preliminary interviews with the general contacts⁵ and an initial review of the literature (particularly through theories of power, as discussed in the next chapter). At this early stage therefore, attempts were made to bring together empowerment's diverse strands into some sort of organised structure. Initially this structure consisted of a series of headings representing different strands (similar to the eventual 'dimensions'), and short lists below each to illustrate each strand (later described as 'key distinctions'). The research tools were designed to develop understanding of these initial dimensions and distinctions, to identify practical examples where possible, and to identify new themes and issues. The content of the early framework was consequently altered, extended or removed over time as the research continued and as a more critical understanding of

⁵ As listed in the earlier Acknowledgements. Their role is more fully discussed in (1.3) Researching Empowerment (Selecting a Sample, Identifying Projects, pp40-2).

empowerment developed. A study visit to Brazil⁶ and, most significantly, extensive fieldwork with the eight Scottish projects influenced various intermediate versions of the framework, with later processes of analysis and interpretation resulting in the final version proposed in Part Six.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that there is a need to unpack the concept of empowerment as it applies to practice in a critical and exploratory way. Existing attempts to define and conceptualise empowerment have their insights, however overall they promote a limited evaluative approach which fails to reflect the diversity and complexity of empowerment practice.

A conceptual framework was developed through this research which alternatively highlights empowerment's key themes and dimensions through a series of critical questions. The emergence of this framework began from an exploration of theories of power, the subject of the next chapter.

⁶ This is discussed in (2.1) Roots of Empowerment (Philosophical and Historical Traditions: Paulo Freire and the Brazilian Model, pp62-6).

1.2 POWER AND EMPOWERMENT

Introduction

"In order to understand empowerment, and policies and processes that accidentally or purposefully are or are not empowering, we must first understand something about what we mean by power and how it can be interpreted and perceived" (Servian 1996 p20).

This chapter begins to unpack empowerment by exploring its relationship with power. The common ground between power and empowerment is first identified, before competing theories of power are outlined. This review concludes that there appears to be no ideal theory of power from which to explore empowerment, however existing theories do make a critical contribution through seven key dimensions around which they are commonly structured. These dimensions are the roles of agency and structure; and whether power is active and passive; endogenous and exogenous; conflictual or consensual; overt and covert; zero sum or limitless; and concrete or relational. Each of these dimensions is explored, and their implications for empowerment reviewed.

Power and Empowerment: Common Ground

Contrary to Rowland's (1995) claim that the use of the word empowerment hides issues of power and inequality, the concept of power appears to enjoy a high profile in the empowerment literature (with Bachrach and Botwinick 1992; Cairncross et al 1992; Craig and Mayo 1995; Means and Smith 1994; Nelson and Wright 1995; Price 1990; Rees 1991; Servian 1996; and Wilcox 1994 all discussing the relationship between power and empowerment). Such visibility is perhaps unsurprising given the linguistic roots of empowerment, however the links between the concepts extend beyond shared semantics to three areas of commonality.

The first is that power, like empowerment, is "an essentially contested concept" (Lukes 1974) with "no noncontroversial definition" (Bachrach and Botwinick 1992 p50). Theories of power almost always start with detailed critiques of competing hypotheses and models, before proposing alternative emphases on or combinations of specific dimensions of power. This confusion around the meaning of power helps

explain the difficulty in clearly defining empowerment, as definitions of the latter rely heavily on definitions of the former (Rowlands 1995).

Second, any interpretation of empowerment practice relies on understanding power. Unpacking empowerment involves exploring the practical application of different power strategies and structures, for example assessing how far empowerment strategies aim to reflect local power structures (Wachtel 1974), or whether clients are viewed as oppressed rather than disadvantaged (Mitchell 1989).

Third, theories of power offer a framework for theorising empowerment through their structure around key dimensions, such as debates around whether power is concrete or relational, or whether it is an individual or collective concept. Debates around empowerment also focus on these dimensions.

It is a common view in the literature that understanding power is an essential precondition for understanding empowerment. Dissenters simply have a different emphasis, such as Kieffer (1984) who argues that empowerment should be explored from the angle of powerlessness rather than power. Just as it is vital to unpack the concept of empowerment to deepen one's understanding, it is first necessary to unpack the concept of power, or at least clarify the use of the term (Rees 1991).

Theories of Power

"There is ... a large and diverse literature on power in social collectivities and organisations which ought to inform any discussion of empowerment" (Price 1990 p166).

Whilst the power literature is substantial, there is little unanimity, instead representing a "critical onslaught" of one theorist against the other (Van Til 1973 p345).

Early elitist theories of power, such as those promoted by Mills (1956), were criticised by Dahl (1961), who suggests power is not held by an economic elite, but is rather pluralist and dispersed amongst different community leaders. Power, he argued, can be identified in observable decision-making behaviour and its consequent outcomes.

Bachrach and Baratz (1970) however argued that a single powerful elite not only controls decisions, but also sets the agenda. Thus observable behaviour and overt conflict are insufficient indicators of power, and non-decision-making and covert

conflict also illustrate its exercise. Bachrach and Baratz drew on Schattschneider's (1960) concept of the "mobilization of bias", whereby "some issues are organised into politics, whilst others are organised out" (p71), and thus vested (not pluralist) interests control the agenda:

"The flaw in the pluralist heaven is that the heavenly chorus sings with a strong upper class accent. Probably about 90% of the people cannot get into the pressure system" (p35).

Lukes (1974) is critical of the individualism and behaviourism of both pluralist and elitist theories, preferring a socio-political analysis whereby groups and institutions exercise power. Thus structures, rather than individual decision-making, determines bias within the system. The radical aspect of Lukes' analysis is rooted in his claim that power is exercised in non-observable, latent conflict, whereby socialisation, mass media and indoctrination determine individual wants and demands even against their interests. Rees (1991) argues that this model "embodies the spirit and objectives of empowerment" (p40) due to its political analysis and potential for creative development in practice. However Cairncross et al (1992) criticise Lukes' for being difficult to operationalise and for abandoning the role of individual autonomy.

Wrong (1979) takes a different approach, and addresses how power, as intended influence, is held and used. He identifies four forms of power (force, manipulation, persuasion and authority) and five bases of authority (coercion, inducement, legitimation, competence and personal authority). Wrong's analysis fails to acknowledge earlier arguments by Bachrach and Baratz (1970), who claim force is not power (as people have no choice between compliance and non-compliance), that manipulation is a form of force not power, and that authority and power only come together within conflict.

Foucault's (1986) analysis frames power as a historically-rooted, social construction of norms and values which attempt to suppress and exclude diversity. Discourse acts as a route for the transfer of dominant ideology in society, and those who challenge dominant ideals through words or actions are deviant. This recognition of both diversity and structured oppression finds support amongst some feminist writers (Kitzinger 1991), whilst others complain this conflictual model fails to explain the consensual elements of empowerment (Deveaux 1994). Deveaux (1994) argues for an alternative interpretation which emphasises both personal and collective power experiences and strategies.

Clegg (1989) offers a postmodern theory, where what power does is of more interest than what it is. According to Clegg, power is a relational, ever-changing and complex

game, whereby the 'rules of the game' ensure those players with dispositional power are inherently more powerful than others, whilst those with episodic power are only more powerful when exercising power. The game is played out within circuits of power operating at three levels of agency, social integration, and system integration, with power relationships only being fixed, and potentially challenged, at "obligatory passage points" (p224). Cairncross et al (1992) claim Clegg's analysis allows for the clear identification of power in practice, using his theory within their research into tenant participation. Haugaard (1992) however criticises Clegg's confusing "linguistic label swapping" (p55), claiming that episodic and dispositional power are simply new (and less clear) terms for old dimensions.

Within the empowerment literature specifically, a number of writers find fault with mainstream power theories in their entirety. Servian (1996) criticises their top-down tendencies, whereby the powerless are seen as passive victims rather than active participants in power relations, instead advocating a psychological theory of power. This is adapted from Seligman's (1975) concept of learned helplessness, which emphasises individual agency as well as structural conditions. Rowlands (1995) challenges power theorists' insistence on describing the distribution of power, rather than more critically proposing methods for redistribution. Berry (1988a) also argues that a critical analysis of power inequalities is essential to understand empowerment, as:

"The notion of empowerment ... does challenge notions not only of the unequal distribution of power, but also about what power is, how it is gained, shared or lost" (p270).

In addition, theorists' tendency to frame power relations through reference to the respective roles of A's, B's and C's (for example 'A exercises power over B when...') appears neither to clarify the complexities nor represent the diversity of power and empowerment in practice. (Bachrach and Baratz 1970; Dahl 1961; Haugaard 1992; Lukes 1974; and Wrong 1979 all discuss power in such terms). This lack of clarity continues, Stewart and Taylor (1995) note, despite three decades of theorising, with a "failure to address basic issues about how power operates" being "the most marked feature". Consequently those working with power and empowerment continue to struggle to understand "the ways in which existing power relationships in the political and professional arena are continually reinforced" (pv).

There is therefore no agreement on an ideal power theory from which to develop theories of empowerment. All existing theories have their limitations, and the debates between theorists ultimately confuse rather than clarify the role of power in empowerment. However theories of power do retain a central role here, in offering a

conceptual structure of key dimensions which inform any exploration of empowerment. Seven such dimensions are identified here.

First, there is the tension between agency and structure, exploring the extent to which individuals construct their own actions, as opposed to being (knowingly or otherwise) shaped, influenced or constrained by historical, institutional, or organisational forces. Lukes (1974) criticises Dahl (1961) and Bachrach and Baratz (1970) for their behaviourist focus on individual decision-making, which emphasises agency at the expense of structure and ignores forces such as ideology. Others however maintain a primary focus on individual autonomy and personal experiences of power relations (Cairncross et al 1992; Kieffer 1984). These two extremes are not necessarily mutually exclusive, with for example Foucault (1986) identifying power both within social value systems and within the individual experience of power relations.

Second, and linked to agency and structure, power can be both active and passive. Thus individuals actively and interactively seek power, or passively and unquestioningly accept existing power relations. Servian (1996) criticises mainstream power theorists' tendency to characterise the powerless as inevitably passive and the powerful as constantly active in maintaining their superior position. bell hooks (1984 in Deveau 1994) also criticises this tendency to see individuals as either powerless (passive) or powerful (active), claiming that individuals should be encouraged to recognise the powers they already possess and use (also Preston-Shoot 1992). Freire (1972a; 1972b) argues that only active subjects can critically reflect on their personal experience and challenge power relations, whereas those who remain passive will continue to be oppressed. Thus empowerment involves a transformation, and recognises people are "experts about their own lives" (Reinelt 1994 p688). As Rappaport (1981) claims "Empowerment implies that many competencies are already present, or at least possible, given niches and opportunities" (p16).

Third, power can be seen as endogenous (internal) and exogenous (external). Endogenous power is situated within individuals, and thus empowerment occurs through the personal development of internally latent or dormant power. Exogenous power is situated outwith individuals and, although the individual can still hold power, they do not control its source. Servian (1996) argues that elitist power theories ignore individuals' own potential power by focusing only on those exercising power. Nelson and Wright (1995) however warn against classifying power as a personal attribute, claiming external sources of power, such as resources, are critical. This latter view supports the Marxist argument (discussed in Craig and Mayo 1995) that individual empowerment will always be limited within capitalist power relations

characterised by the unequal ownership of, access to, and control over economic resources.

The remaining dimensions, which are particularly critical in conceptualising empowerment, are all related to a fourth dimension of power as conflictual or consensual. Theorists frequently define power as inherently conflictual, be that conflict overt (Dahl 1961), covert (Bachrach and Baratz 1970; Bachrach and Botwinick 1992), or latent (Lukes 1974). Such explanations find some support in the empowerment literature. For example Osborne (1994) argues that "empowerment is not a consensual process, but is conflictual" (p62), suggesting that the powerful will attempt to preserve their power over others at any cost to avoid losing power.

However others argue that consensual definitions are also required, as "the function of power is necessary not only when there are conflictual interests but also when there is consensus about the collective goals" (Crespi 1992 p117). Thus within empowerment practice, power is conceptualised as a creative force for personal development and collective action as much as an instrument of repression or oppression (Deveaux 1994; Servian 1996). Gibson (1991) argues that power incorporates a more female interpretation of co-operation, rather than conflict and struggle. Such consensual power relations refer to power for or power to, where people do not inevitably lose if others gain power (Carabine 1996); power within (Nozick 1993), where power grows from an internal source; and power with (Gore 1993 in Morley 1995; Rogers 1978), "power-with-others" (Nozick 1993 p31) and power between (Labonte 1991), where power is collectively or collaboratively exercised.

Fifth, is the dimension of overt and covert power. Overt power is exercised within direct and observable conflict, as in Dahl's (1961) pluralist theory. Covert power is exercised through invisible "structures including norms, beliefs, rituals, institutions, organisations and procedures ... that operate systematically to benefit certain groups and persons at the expense of others" (Bachrach and Botwinick 1992 p14). Covert power can be both direct and indirect, as in Bachrach and Baratz' (1970) conceptualisation of power as non-decision-making:

"Demands for change in the existing allocation of benefits and privileges in the community can be suffocated before they are even voiced; or kept covert; or killed before they gain access to the relevant decision-making arena; or, failing all of these things, maimed or destroyed in the decision-implementing stage of the policy process" (p44).

Lukes (1974) terms these overt and covert analyses the first and second dimensions of power, adding a third 'radical' dimension of latent (potential) power. This identifies

power in non-events, whereby structural social and institutional interests shape objective interests. Thus potential threats to the power holders are minimised, and many are excluded from the power system. Digeser (1992 in Servian 1996) uses a Foucauldian analysis to add a fourth dimension of social rules, values and discourses which constrain individuals.

Sixth, is the dichotomy of zero-sum or limitless power, where the exercise of power is either restricting or liberating (Rees 1991). If a person can only become more powerful at the expense of someone else's power, then power must be a zero-sum game. Power is limited in supply, and the increase and decrease in power are exactly counter-balanced. This interpretation is problematic for empowerment (Craig and Mayo 1995) as "the empowerment of citizens/ users is seen as inevitably involving a relinquishment of power on the part of professionals and others" (Baistow 1994 p39; also Hess 1984; McConnell and Taylor 1988).

Alternatively if one person's power can grow without another's being affected, power is limitless or "positive-sum" (Holmes 1992 in Stewart and Taylor 1995). This conceptualisation echoes Fromm's notion of "potent power" (1960 in Rees 1991), which is creative, enabling and identified by Rees (1991) as "the form of power which captures the spirit and objective of empowerment" (p15). Barnes and Walker (1996) suggest this overcomes the "narrow understanding of the nature of power" (p383), better explaining how individual and collective empowerment "demonstrates the way in which power may develop where it did not previously exist and where it is not at the expense of anyone else" (p383). Limitless power ensures a win-win situation for all involved, as those with differential power can work together (Wilcox 1994) and achieve synergy:

"It [empowerment] is an interactive process based on a synergistic, not a zero-sum, assumption about power; that is, the process of empowerment enlarges the power in the situation as opposed to merely redistributing it" (Vogt and Murrell 1990 pp8-9 in Kernaghan 1992 p197).

Finally, power is identified as fixed and concrete, and as relational and shifting. Concrete power can be held and passed around as a possession, whilst relational power varies over time and place, and thus power and powerlessness only exist in relation to someone else (Bachrach and Baratz 1970; Carabine 1996; Wrong 1979). Relational power means no-one is inherently or independently powerful or powerless and there are no set centres of power (Foucault 1986; Clegg 1989). Power is generally seen as concrete by those who follow zero-sum analyses of power (Dahl 1961), and relational by those who conceive that power is limitless (Carabine 1996). However Knight (1994) suggests power can be both a possession "to be fought over and won"

and also "infinite and relational" (p21). Similarly Clegg (1989) claims power becomes relational as it flows through circuits of power, however it is concretised at "obligatory passage points" (p224). Thus, like empowerment, power can be both an end and a means (Gibson 1996), a process and an outcome (Mondros and Wilson 1994).

These dimensions of power offer critical insight into the nature of empowerment in practice, for example explaining why powerholders may see empowerment as a threat or an opportunity, and suggesting alternative practical approaches to empowerment as an ongoing process or a final product. The influence of these dimensions on the conceptualisation and practice of empowerment will re-emerge as this exploration of empowerment continues.

Conclusion

Power and empowerment are inter-related linguistically, theoretically and through shared problems of definition and clarity. Whilst theories of power are well developed, theorists' contributions appear largely based on detailed critiques of their predecessors, with no individual theory offering an ideal starting point for explorations of empowerment.

What these theories do usefully offer are seven dimensions of power identified here: agency and structure; active and passive power; endogenous and exogenous power; conflictual or consensual power; overt and covert power; zero sum or limitless power; and concrete or relational power. Exploration of these helps to unpack empowerment by outlining a number of its component parts.

These first two chapters have demonstrated the need to further unpack empowerment. However before this critical exploration continues, the methods used in the research are outlined.

1.3 RESEARCHING EMPOWERMENT

Introduction

Patton (1982) recommends that research be based on "thoughtful methods decisions" (p186), which reflect the nature and context of the subject under investigation. The empowerment focus of this research had a notable impact on the methods chosen.

This chapter outlines the methods used in this research, beginning by explaining why an explorative rather than evaluative approach was chosen. Together with the focus on conceptual and theoretical development, this suggested the best methods would be emergent, rooted in grounded theory, and qualitative in design. Each of these approaches are reviewed, before discussing the sampling methods used to select both the projects and commentators. The multiple research tools - interviews, documentary analysis and observation - are then explained. Issues of analysis and interpretation are briefly discussed. Finally the extent to which participants may or may not have experienced this research process as empowering in itself is questioned.

Making Methods Choices: Exploration not Evaluation

"Empowerment at all levels of analysis can have different intensities that can change over time. It is not an absolute threshold that once reached can be labelled as empowered" (Zimmerman 1990b p170).

The literature on empowerment evaluation advocates more flexible, participatory, process-based and action-oriented methods than traditional evaluative approaches (Fawcett et al 1996; Fetterman et al 1996; Vanderplaat 1995; Yin et al 1996). However it suffers from a tendency to see empowerment as a subject for experimentation or measurement, rather than conceptual or theoretical exploration and analysis. As noted earlier,¹ the aim here was not to establish a 'watertight' definition of empowerment against which practice could be assessed or evaluated, or to find a single correct solution to the research question (Palumbo 1987), but instead to explore empowerment as an ever-changing and multi-dimensional construct which can be variously conceptualised and practised.

¹ In (1.1) Empowerment: Definitions and Concepts (Defining Empowerment, pp21-2).

Møller (1995) claims that, whilst evaluative approaches tend to be problem-oriented and value-based, exploratory research is arguably less patronising and exclusive. Thus whilst "Evaluation is concerned with making judgements about the ... work which has been undertaken including its successes and failures" (Principal Community Education Officers Group 1996 p304), exploration is more interested in understanding what is happening per se. This research consequently aimed "to gather people's stories and observe their lives and in the process identify and define what the 'variables' are" (Kidder and Fine 1987 p60).

Emergent Methods

The decision to explore and not evaluate was the key consideration when selecting an overall methodological approach and accompanying research tools. In particular this meant the research would be "first and foremost emergent" (Lofland and Lofland 1984 p19).

Emergent methods, being continually adjusted and refined, are particularly recommended within both naturalistic (Chambers et al 1992) and community-based research, where contexts and players frequently change (Fairweather and Davidson 1986; Patton 1982). Indeed this approach responded well to projects' changes, with the research mapping each projects' empowerment practice over months, and even years in some cases. In addition, emergent methods are ideal for theory-building, with the research process becoming an ongoing cycle of action and reflection (Reason 1994) through which theories are continually built, tested and modified (Rubin and Rubin 1995).

However despite its advantages, allowing methods and tools to emerge is not always straightforward, seeming "often fumbling" (Kidder and Fine 1987 p60), and a "messy ... rummaging process" (McCracken 1988 p19). Within this approach the researcher has to learn to live with uncertainty and constant change.

Grounded Theory

"The constructivist position rejects the notion of an a priori theory determining a research design to obtain data that is congruent with a theory. Instead the theory is generated from the collected data, and the theoretical design unfolds as the inquiry progresses" (Chambers et al 1992 p298-9).

The focus on emergent conceptualisation and theorisation learned much from Glaser and Strauss' (1967) "grounded theory" approach, whereby ongoing information-gathering constantly feeds into the development of theoretical frameworks. Here "a grounded theory is systematically and inductively arrived at through covariant ongoing collection and analysis of data" (Glaser 1992 p15).

The intention that a conceptual framework of empowerment would emerge over time reflects this view that theory is generated rather than applied (O'Brien 1993), and follows rather than precedes data (Chambers et al 1992). Thus theory building is continuous, adapting to new situations and events over time (Spiegel 1979), and consequently shaking off the restrictions of existing theories' "excess baggage" (Glaser 1992).

Grounded theory is widely recommended within research which is qualitative (Morse 1994a; Rubin and Rubin 1995; Treleaven 1994) and "open to the emergent" (Glaser 1992 p15). Rooting theorisation in practice also helps gain credibility, overcoming criticisms of empowerment as meaningless rhetoric:

"The role of theory is precisely to make things that were hidden visible, to define some patterns and give some meanings to the sorts of observations that social researchers continually make when investigating society" (O'Brien 1993 p11).

Qualitative Methods

"The quantitative researcher uses a lens that brings a narrow strip of the field of vision into very precise focus. The qualitative researcher uses a lens that permits a much less precise vision of a much broader strip. ... Qualitative research does not survey the terrain, it mines it" (McCracken 1988 pp16-7).

Traditionally community development research has been criticised for its positivist paradigm and over-reliance on quantitative measurement, experimental design, and hypothetic-deductive methodology (Patton 1982). The present research was alternatively built around what Patton (1982) terms a "holistic-inductive paradigm", a qualitative approach based on in-depth, open-ended interviewing, personal observation, holistic analysis, detailed description and close contact with those being researched.

Qualitative methods are commonly acknowledged as most useful for exploration and theory development (Rees 1991), particularly where concepts are built around multi-layered and inter-connected yet conflicting strands (Chambers et al 1992; Hakim 1987; Rubin and Rubin 1995). Qualitative research "aims to produce rounded

understandings of complexity, detail and context" (Mason 1996 p4), helping to solve "intellectual puzzles" (Mason 1996 p6), of which empowerment is surely one.

More specifically, these methods are commonly promoted for empowerment-based research, for "as long as we continue to use primarily quantitative methods we will have a limited understanding of the construct" (Zimmerman 1990b p175). Qualitative approaches alternatively allow for the "creative research strategies" necessary to understand empowerment's complexities (Zimmerman 1990b p171; also Morse 1994a), whilst also seeing participants as the empowerment experts:

"Qualitative research lets people speak for themselves. By doing so, it allows a better understanding of why people think and act in the ways they do" (Sykes et al 1992 p2).

Although no single methodological philosophy underpinned this research, elements of ethnomethodology and phenomenology were influential. For example the former is evident in the use of grounded theory, emergent approach, multiple methods, and use of direct quotations, whilst the latter is identifiable within the conversational interviews and theory development (Mason 1996; Morse 1994a).

This research was also heavily influenced by naturalistic methods, which recognise reality as constructed, multiple and holistic, rejecting assumptions of causality and value neutrality (Kelly 1987), and focusing on interpretation rather than deduction (Rubin and Rubin 1995). Here people rather than survey instruments act as data collectors, within natural rather than experimental or controlled settings (Chambers et al 1992; Kelly 1987), thus usefully contextualising findings socially and politically (Burton 1978; Palumbo 1987).

Qualitative research is commonly criticised for lacking validity and objectivity. Supporters of this approach however argue that the former can be achieved by using 'true-to-life' settings, whilst the latter is irrelevant if one believes values are inherent in all inquiry (Kelly 1987). Guba (1981 in Patton 1982) argues that fairness rather than objectivity should be sought, to reflect multiple perspectives and realities, whilst Rubin and Rubin (1995) similarly seek balance. Patton (1982) advises that neutrality be sought around the content of what is said, rather than who says it. Recognising the unavoidable impact of the qualitative researcher, Rowan and Reason (1981 in Reason 1994) advise a stance of "critical subjectivity". This recognises that "Researchers are both an 'eye' that observes and an 'I' that is involved in what is being observed" (Palumbo 1987 p29). However more critical than either validity or objectivity in qualitative research are Patton's (1982) six 'R's': that it is responsive, relevant, realistic, rigorous, reliable and readable. Others add replication (Cook 1985);

credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability (Lincoln and Guba 1985); transparency, consistency, communicability (Lofland and Lofland 1984; Rubin and Rubin 1995); and soundness (Morse 1994a).

Selecting a Sample

Random and representative sampling is clearly inappropriate for exploratory, qualitative research, where maximisation of insight into the research question is the primary consideration. Purposive and theoretical sampling techniques were alternatively chosen, as these assist theory development (Arber 1993) by highlighting "especially illuminating examples" (Hakim 1987 p141), thus maximising theoretical insight without assuming that individual findings can be generalised to all cases (Chambers et al 1992). These techniques supports a 'less is more' principle (McCracken 1988), and form crucial components of the grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Glaser 1992).

Identifying Projects

Eight projects were selected which shared an overt commitment to empowerment, but which demonstrated varied methods of work, contexts and target groups. The projects were necessarily restricted to central Scotland, as financial constraints limited travel costs, however varied geographical locations were actively sought.

These eight projects are outlined in turn in Appendix One: Project Summaries. The summaries have been placed at the end of this thesis for ease of reference, however they bring together valuable information on each project's location, dates of operation, target groups, aims, funding arrangements, key partners, staff, management, key activities, and current (at September 1998) status.

Selecting these projects was by no means straightforward, as although "empowerment groups have been sprouting, like so many desert flowers, all over town" (Economist 1990 p21), there is obviously no directory of initiatives which have empowerment as a stated objective. Projects were therefore identified more informally through word of mouth, with basic 'detective' work being supplemented by contacts in the statutory, academic and voluntary sectors, including eighteen 'general contacts'.² This group were recognised 'experts' in empowerment practice, and were interviewed at an early

² The General Contacts are listed in the earlier Acknowledgements (p6).

stage about general empowerment issues and conceptualisations, and identifiable examples of empowerment practice.

Projects' stated objectives of empowerment were initially identified in documentary sources, such as funding applications, annual reports and publicity leaflets. Preliminary interviews with a key project participant (commonly the project leader or co-ordinator) confirmed this overt commitment, whilst also allowing some exploration of the relative role and importance of empowerment within their project.

The SAMH Advocacy and Empowerment Group was chosen as the pilot project, partly because it was the most time-limited, being due to wind up a few months after initial contact was made. Seven further projects were identified and access was similarly negotiated. In just one additional case was access refused, where an internal organisational evaluation was already planned and participants were wary of research overload. The many problems which can occur when seeking access (as outlined in Lofland and Lofland 1984) were simply not experienced here.

A number of projects were considered but rejected for this research, for example due to their distance from the research base (Glasgow), similarity to other projects, organisational upheavals, and the lack of any concrete work by which to explore empowerment in practice. This latter point meant that strategies and policies promoting empowerment (such as Strathclyde Regional Council's Social Strategy) were not researched in themselves, being discussed here as literature sources.

The sampling technique used was effective in identifying and accessing a range of projects. Eight projects was felt to be the maximum number which could be effectively researched, and was considered to be an optimum number in terms of representing a range of geographical locations, contexts, approaches to empowerment and user groups. However in retrospect this sample size had several limitations. In one respect, the limited number of projects meant that numerous user groups and approaches to empowerment were not represented, such as projects working with children or initiatives promoting tenant participation. Thus eight projects could be seen as too few.

Yet on the contrary, and more significantly, whilst the selection of each could be purposively or theoretically justified, eight projects was on balance simply too many, in particular given their geographical spread and the in-depth nature of the research. Consequently the time spent with each was too stretched, the later analytical work required was substantial, and overall each project was neglected to a certain extent,

with only occasional and sporadic contact with and feedback from the researcher. The researcher's intention to feed back the research results to projects on a regular basis, and certainly within each project's lifetime, was not achieved. However the pay-off here was that covering eight projects resulted in the collection of extremely rich and varied data, with every single project making a unique and valuable contribution to the research. Note therefore that it was not the research which suffered as such here, but rather the researched, who could be seen as getting poor 'value-for-access' overall.

The selected projects were initially viewed as a group of case studies, each of which would represent different 'models of empowerment' to be compared and contrasted. Such case study methods are commonly used to research "theory in practice" (Baxter 1996 p29). However whilst they were case studies as far as individual projects were individually researched, are used as discrete examples throughout this thesis, and are separately summarised in Appendix One (pp297-310), as many conceptual and practical commonalities and differences seemed to exist within projects as between them. In particular the potential for alternative and conflicting conceptualisations of empowerment between participants in individual projects was not initially adequately understood. A more thematic approach therefore emerged, whereby empowerment conceptualisations and practices, as illustrated by both projects and their participants together fed into the emerging conceptual framework.

Identifying Commentators

Theoretical and purposive sampling techniques were also used to identify the commentators, aiming to ensure that those who were interviewed were the most informative about their project and its empowerment practice. Beyond the first contact, further commentators were identified through a snowball sampling or "networked introduction" method (Rubin and Rubin 1995). Here commentators were asked who else they believed it would be useful for the researcher to speak to, taking care to ensure a balance of workers, managers, users, volunteers and other participants. Gorden (1980) argues that such "key informants" not only have firsthand knowledge and direct experience of the subject being explored, but are also familiar with the locality and its players, thus easily locating and accessing further contacts.

Overall, between eight and thirteen commentators were interviewed within each project.³ Project co-ordinators/ leaders were generally interviewed twice due to their

³ Each project's commentators are listed in the earlier Acknowledgements (pp7-8).

critical role as central project actors, whilst others were interviewed on one occasion only.

This snowballing method is recognised as especially useful for accessing networks of people (Arber 1993), and acknowledging the multiple interests which exist within individual projects (Cook 1985). However snowball sampling carries with it a number of risks. In particular, by relying on individuals to recommend other individuals, it is possible for the sample to become biased towards those with similar views. Thus understanding of the research topic remains limited, and insight is skewed towards the wholly sympathetic or wholly negative opinions promoted by single networks or 'cliques'. More commonly, access tends to be restricted to project champions rather than critics, reflecting Sieber's (1973) warning that gatekeepers may allow access only to less critical "elite groups".

However this research did not appear to suffer from such sampling bias for three reasons. First, individual commentators were informed that the researcher sought to interview a range of participants within each project, including both those involved in day-to-day project work and those involved from outwith (such as management committee members or evaluators). Thus a range of views was actively sought and represented. Second, the use of multiple interviews and the triangulation of multiple research methods within each project ensured empowerment practice was explored from a number of different angles. Finally, it is worth reiterating here that this research was not evaluative, and therefore the risks of bias were less to do with restricting insight to commentators wholly promoting or criticising individual projects, and more to do with ensuring that the range of approaches to empowerment in each project could be identified and explored. Thus commentators were selected to give optimum illumination and insight into empowerment practice, rather than to give an objective assessment of the effectiveness of their own project.

In practice, the chosen commentators represented many different levels of involvement, with individuals appearing to express a wide range of both critical and congratulatory views about their projects and about empowerment more generally. For example the Foundation for Community Leadership Development commentators included founders, workers, former management committee members, trainers, trainees, a supervisor/ evaluator from the local authority, and external consultants who had worked jointly with FCLD on various initiatives. A number of these commentators expressed particularly critical views of the Foundation and its methods, despite all these contacts being rooted in FCLD's director (who himself championed the project's approach).

The Research Tools

"No single image in the kaleidoscope provides all the desired perspective so it may be necessary to turn the kaleidoscope slightly now and then in order to increase the number of images and perspectives available" (Patton 1982 p157).

Reflecting the overall "active-reactive-adaptive" research design, the research tools emerged over time in line with "situational responsiveness" (Patton 1987 p19). Multiple research tools - interviews, documentary analysis and observation - were together 'triangulated' to obtain "thick description", incorporating depth, richness and detail (Geertz 1973 in Rubin and Rubin 1995; also Morse 1994a). Before their development is outlined, this use of multiplism and triangulation are discussed.

Multiplism and Triangulation

"Multiplism ... places multiple causal models in competition with each other. It uses multiple constructs, multiple measures of each construct, multiple types of constructs - mentalist and historical as well as empirical - and examines the fit of the models to the data and interpretation multiple times" (Kelly 1987 p287).

Whilst positivist paradigms assume reality is singular, deterministic, ahistorical, convergent and fragmentable, multiplism acknowledges that reality is created, divergent, inter-related and differentially perceived (Cook 1985; Guba and Lincoln 1981 in Patton 1982; Palumbo 1987). This approach is consequently proclaimed "postpositivist" (Kelly 1987 p287). Here research design does not involve deciding which individual methods or tools are best, but which combination (Cook 1985; Gorden 1980; Webb et al 1966 in Sieber 1973), with multiple methods and tools then being 'triangulated', to compare what people say with what they do (Fielding 1993):

"The fundamental postulate of multiplism is that when it is not clear which of several options for question generalisation or method choice is 'correct', all of them should be selected so as to 'triangulate' on the most useful or the most likely to be true" (Cook 1985 p38).

In this way the limitations of individual research tools are offset by the strengths of their alternatives (Chambers et al 1992; Mark and Shotland 1987; Sieber 1973). Triangulation also increases reliability, as different findings can be cross-checked (Gorden 1980) and points of convergence identified (Yin 1989).

Whilst the literature warns against using multiplism simply as a reaction against positivism (Cook 1985) or because '2 seems better than 1' (Mark and Shotland 1987), triangulating different research tools is particularly useful in researching "complex phenomenon" (Gorden 1980 p12) where multi-dimensional, and at times conflicting, perceptions and actions are commonplace. For empowerment research it therefore offers an ideal approach.

In this research, empowerment was explored within and across the projects through the use of three methods: qualitative interviews, documentary analysis and observation.

Qualitative Interviews

The qualitative interview is "an incredibly powerful research tool" (Rubin and Rubin 1995 pvii), which acted as the primary method of researching empowerment. Interviews "allow respondents to tell their own story in their own terms" (McCracken 1988 p34; also Sandelowski 1991), whilst also enabling unobservable phenomena to be explored, such as thoughts, feelings, intentions, values, beliefs and attitudes (Gorden 1980; Patton 1982). As Patton (1982) claims, "If participant observation means 'walk a mile in my shoes', then in-depth interviewing means 'walk a mile in my head'." (p182).

Qualitative interviewing is particularly recommended for both exploratory research (Fielding 1993; Gorden 1980), which aims "to find out what kind of things are happening rather than to determine kinds of things that the researcher already believes can happen" (Lofland 1971 p76 in Fielding 1993 p137), and theoretical research:

"In qualitative interviewing, theories emerge from the interviews, not as mere extensions of the academic literature. The theories reach for broader significance but remain firmly grounded in the experiences and understanding of the interviewees" (Rubin and Rubin 1995 p63).

The interviews were semi-structured, with the questions varying within and across projects. A typical interview schedule is reproduced in Appendix Two. This design ensured first that each interview focused on commentators' own areas of knowledge and experience, and second that a 'conversational' approach could be followed. Qualitative interviews are frequently described as conversational (Mondros and Wilson 1994), being termed a "guided conversation" (Fielding 1993), "a conversation with a purpose" (Burgess 1984 in Mason 1996 p38), or "a gentle approach to interviewing" between "conversational partners" (Rubin and Rubin 1995 pp 1&10). Whilst the interviewer guides, the interviewee is free to steer the discussion (Hakim

1987), resulting in a more relaxed and informal approach (Mason 1996). Open-ended and probing questions follow the flow of the discussion rather than being rigidly ordered, yet interviewees are encouraged to "stay close to real examples" (Rubin and Rubin 1995 p39). The interview questions were designed to be open-ended, neutral, sensitive and clear (Patton 1982), and care was taken to avoid "academese" (Whitmore 1994 p95). Most of the interviews were held within project bases, with the majority of the exceptions held in commentators' homes. In almost all cases, interviews were held in private.

The questions were continually revised and developed, first following the pilot study and subsequently as new issues arose and others appeared redundant. This follows Kidder and Fine's (1987) claim that "Researchers who work inductively continue to generate hypotheses and look for new questions even as they gather data" (p60). Such adaptability is not without its problems, however overall the advantages outweigh any limitations:

"By adding a new interview question halfway through the fieldwork one reduces the generalizability of the information obtained, but to ignore the need to attempt some systematic verification of unanticipated consequences and side effects that may be discovered during fieldwork is worse than changing the instrument" (Patton 1982 p156).

Whether to tape or manually note interview data is widely debated within the literature, and alternative approaches were tried in this research. Those promoting note-taking argue that taping discourages listening (Yin 1989), whilst note-taking develops rapport and suggests to respondents that their views are being taken seriously. However note-taking is criticised for researcher bias in what is noted (Gorden 1980; Johnson 1976), and for creating a "nonconversation" (Patton 1982). Taping is recommended for gathering complex and fast-flowing information, in particular where categories have yet to be determined (Gorden 1980; Patton 1982), and whilst it can increase formality and be off-putting for some, the data is more accurate and retrievable (Rubin and Rubin 1995), more reliably witnessing the interview situation:

"Tape recorders do not tune out of conversations, change what has been said because of interpretation (either conscious or unconscious), or record more slowly than what is being said" (Patton 1982 p179).

Ideally, note-taking and taping are used together, helping the researcher construct questions as the interview progresses and aiding later analysis by highlighting significant themes or issues (Chambers et al 1992; Patton 1982). This joint approach was selected following the initial interviews with the general contacts and the pilot project, where solely taking notes resulted in much rich and valuable data being lost

in summaries and paraphrases. Taping qualitative interviews alternatively captured the detail, richness and intricacies of what people said, reflecting Patton's (1982) claim that:

"The primary data of in-depth, open-ended interviews are quotations. ... The raw data of interviews are the actual quotations spoken by interviewees. There is no substitute for these data" (p179).

The interviews were recorded only with the permission of the commentators. In just three cases permission was refused.⁴

The taped interviews were not fully transcribed due to the lack of time and resources, recognising that a single hour's interviewing can take between three and twelve hours to transcribe, and amount to 10,000 words of text (Gorden 1980; Maccoby and Maccoby 1954; Rubin and Rubin 1995). Alternatively critical concepts, issues and themes were summarised, whilst key quotations were fully transcribed. This follows Rubin and Rubin's (1995) advice to look for stories, narratives, themes and "sexy quotes" (p237) to act as key illustrations. Whilst McCracken (1988) warns that interviews should be transcribed by someone other than the researcher to allow objective analysis of categories, relationships or assumptions, in this research the process of transcription allowed the researcher to become fully submerged in the data, increasing rather than diminishing understanding of empowerment's complexities and multiple dimensions.

The full recording of quotations is particularly recommended for empowerment research, with the concept of biography commonly promoted as a way to both gather rich data and promote empowerment. For example Rees (1991) claims biography encourages a sense of power as individuals map their past and future, consequently decreasing dependency and increasing confidence. He shuns "self indulgent story-telling" in favour of a focus on issues of power and powerlessness and the identification of obstacles to empowerment. Zimmerman (1990b) adds:

"Incorporating comments by research participants in the reporting of our results adds to our understanding of empowerment and strengthens our conclusions. It also exemplifies our value to be inclusive rather than exclusive, engaging rather than controlling, and empowering rather than patronizing" (p176).

Whilst qualitative interviews acted as the primary research tool, the principles of multiplism and triangulation suggested secondary methods would help assess "whether answers in an interview have any relation to actual behaviour, the

⁴ By all three health service participants in the Empowerment Project.

underlying attitudes which govern behaviour, or the factual events which they are asked to report" (Maccoby and Maccoby 1954 p479).

Documentary Analysis

Documents offer a potentially rich source of data (Chambers et al 1992), which can be unobtrusively captured as individuals do not directly divulge information (Fairweather and Davidson 1986). Documentary analysis was chosen as a secondary method within this empowerment research for four main reasons: to map projects' histories and structures; to inform the interview questions; to identify key and recurring issues in empowerment practice; and finally to supplement interview data. Project documents were subjected to "analytical reading" (Hakim 1987) rather than more 'scientific' quantitative or content analysis, again noting key themes, issues and events. This process is discussed in more detail below, under 'Analysis and Interpretation'.

A wide variety of projects' written materials were sought for this analysis, including management committee and other meeting notes, annual and other project reports, discussion and position papers, memos, letters, evaluation reports (commonly written by external evaluators), and press cuttings. The aim here was to reach beyond simply promotional materials, and focus on primary rather than peripheral records (Hakim 1987). Projects demonstrated varied responses to these requests, from "Help yourself - the filing cabinets are over there" (SW&H Fieldnotes) to claims that accessing certain documents would be "inappropriate", with "reservations about what use it is to be put" (EP Document⁵). The extent of the documentary analysis therefore varied considerably between projects, although in all cases some documents were accessed and in most cases all that were requested were made available. In all cases, the documentary analysis took place within project bases, usually in a 'public' space, rather than a private office.

As with the other methods used, documents were found to have a number of flaws as illustrations of empowerment conceptualisation and practice within projects. First, projects displayed varied record-keeping standards, whereby some had organised and complete documentary records, whilst others had more casual arrangements (supporting McConnell's (1996) finding of "haphazard" data collection and recording of events within projects), seeming to rely more heavily on verbal history. Second,

⁵ Comments from health board managers to the Empowerment Project, as cited in personal correspondence between the researcher and the project.

documentary sources tend to overlook participants' own views and experiences, reflecting more top-down recording of events by workers or managers (Baxter 1996).

Third, and perhaps most significantly, a number of commentators expressed scepticism that documentary sources were honest or accurate. For example projects were described as looking good on paper, as written records ignored day-to-day difficulties (EP Fieldnotes), or rather "It might be empowerment on paper but it's not in practice" (commentator in SW&H Fieldnotes). This reflects Kelly's (1987) warning that what is excluded from documents can be as important as what lies within them, as "records are produced within given social contexts by particular individuals who typically have a vested interest in them" (p274). Other writers also claim documents are inaccurate, incomplete, deliberately misleading and biased (Chambers et al 1992; Kelly 1987; Yin 1989). These limitations can be overcome in part by recognising that documents are not written with researchers as the audience and are not necessarily a literal record of events. Again here this supports the use of multiple methods to contradict, corroborate or augment documentary evidence (Yin 1989).

Observation

"It is difficult, if not impossible, to understand a real life situation simply by looking at statistics and graphs. ... Few individuals can grasp the true meaning of a situation without having observed it directly" (Fairweather and Davidson 1986).

The third method which was used here was observation, recognised as a useful tool for mapping events and interactions within natural settings against an overall theoretical framework (Fairweather and Davidson 1986). Importantly, this approach allows processes to be explored, commonly being the focus of ethnomethodological research (Feldman 1995).

Observation took place in two types of situation. First, the researcher participated in specific project activities, such as self help group meetings, training courses and sessions, and staff or volunteers' meetings. In all cases the participants were informed why the researcher was present. Second, general activities, events and interactions were more passively observed during visits to project bases for interviews or documentary analysis.

Observations were recorded in a set of Fieldnotes written up for each project, with note-taking ideally immediately following activities and visits, and aiming for Sykes

et al's (1992) recommendation that "Researchers have to take particular care not to neglect everyday aspects of the phenomena they are observing" (p32).

It should be noted here that these research tools placed great emphasis on commentators' and other participants' perceptions of empowerment practice. These perceptions offer rich, critical and detailed evidence, and necessarily underpin any qualitative exploration of empowerment, however it should be noted that no attempt was made to objectively corroborate their views beyond the use of multiple methods.

Analysis and Interpretation

"As I sit in my office up to my eyeballs in data, I am once again impressed with the enormity of the problem of analyzing qualitative data. I have audiotapes, floppy disks, and written documents. I have my fieldnotes. ... I have copies of reports and minutes of meetings. ... how am I to make sense of them?" (Feldman 1995 p1).

Analysing qualitative data is described as a "process of inference, insight, logic and luck", whereby the "hunch" or "gut feeling" plays a critical role (Morse 1994a pp1&12). This research supported these views that the process of analysis and interpretation is more an art than a science. This process aimed for "interpretation creation" (Feldman 1995), whereby the themes and concepts "embedded" within the data (Rubin and Rubin 1995 p226) are uncovered, rather than results being compared to existing theory. "Theoretical saturation" was therefore sought (Glaser and Strauss 1967 in Rubin and Rubin 1995; also Glaser 1992; Morse 1994a), at which point the data has been so thoroughly analysed that theories begin to take shape. Notably however "theory does not magically emerge from the data (Morse 1994a p25).

Clearly, a degree of analysis and interpretation began at an early stage, in that interview transcripts, fieldnotes from observation and documentary analysis notes were all to some extent selective, in focusing on the empowerment themes, dimensions and issues which were of interest. Once the fieldwork was complete and the tapes were written up (as described earlier), a more in-depth process of analysis and interpretation began.

The three collections of notes (from interviews, observation and documentary analysis) were first read through in detail, to both familiarise the researcher with the data and to identify the emerging themes and dimensions of the conceptual framework of empowerment. In particular, the identification of empowerment's

commonalities, contradictions, ambiguities and tensions was sought. A scheme of colour coding was developed and manually applied to the notes to distinguish themes and dimensions. Some recoding occurred as these themes and dimensions shifted.

This analytical method reflects Crabtree and Miller's (1992) "immersion/chrySTALLIZATION approach", whereby core understanding stems from the "inductive, intuitive, and intensely data-driven" exploration of interview transcripts (p212). Detailed data from documents and fieldnotes were used to inform, confirm and contradict these primary findings. As the research was written up in this thematic way, views from the literature were linked in to meet the aim of integrating theory and practice, and following Morse's (1994a) recommendation that analysis should not occur in a vacuum as "concepts are identified, analyzed, and compared and contrasted with those in the literature" (p38).

Qualitative analytical software packages, such as NUDIST, were not considered for this research. No such packages were available in the Department of Social Policy and Social Work⁶ during the early stages of the research, and thus their use was not built into the research design. Although there would have been some advantages in using this more automated system of analysis, in particular greater time-saving and consistency, manually immersing oneself in the data gives a rich and detailed understanding, as well as a familiarity with the data, which would be otherwise extremely difficult to achieve.

Empowering Research?

"Research can facilitate or undermine empowerment, depending upon how the research is conducted and disseminated" (Florin and Wandersman 1990 p47).

This research sought to explore rather than promote empowerment, however it is worth briefly discussing the issue of empowering research. Concerns are repeatedly raised within certain strands of the research literature, such as feminist and community development research, around how far research can empower or disempower its participants.

Empowering research is defined as working "with, rather than 'on' the researched" (Bowes 1996 p2.8), and collaboratively researching participants rather than subjects

⁶ This Department, at the University of Glasgow, acted as the research base.

(Fawcett 1991; Heron 1981). Patton (1982) claims that this active involvement of participants in the research will result in feelings of empowerment. Qualitative research in particular is commonly promoted as a way to give oppressed groups a voice (Rubin and Rubin 1995), and avoid experimental colonialism whereby 'subjects' are given no control or benefit (Memmi 1965 in Chavis and Wandersman 1986).

Many writers call for potential participants to become more involved in research design and application in this way, promoting a more co-operative and interactive relationship with researchers (Patton 1982; Yoak 1979). Such closer working is seen as particularly relevant at the stage of problem definition (Voth 1979), however stages of analysis and dissemination are also important, with Chambers et al (1992) emphasising the need to negotiate rather than impose meanings and interpretations, and return research results to the researched community. This arguably reduces local scepticism towards research, increasing both its quality and the likelihood that findings will be utilised (Chavis and Wandersman 1986).

Indeed some of the projects saw their own research work as potentially empowering for participants. For example Drumchapel Community Health Project's own evaluations aimed to reflect their wider goals of collaboration, equity and empowerment, by using varied qualitative methods within a "pluralistic, participative, portfolio approach" (DCHP Document⁷). The retention of this evaluative role within the project was seen as particularly critical, as "To be able to carry out our own research is very empowering both for the project and the individuals and groups within it" (DCHP Document⁸).

Although empowering research was not directly explored during the interviews, a number of commentators did describe this research's processes and methods as empowering. For example the informal and relatively unthreatening conversational interviews let people speak for themselves, whilst the overall exploratory and qualitative approach allowed the complexity and diversity of project activities and issues to be fully acknowledged. Several commentators claimed they found the interview process helpful in focusing thoughts and experiences of empowerment in a structured way, in contrast to everyday project practice where "We didn't tend to sit and talk about empowerment" (SW&H Interview).

7 Kennedy, Aine; Tannahill, Carol and Curtice, Lisa (1993) Evaluating 'Health for All' Practice at Community Level: The Drumchapel Healthy Cities Project.

8 Kennedy, Aine (1994) Practising 'Health for All' in a Glasgow Housing Scheme: The Drumchapel Healthy Cities Project 1990-1992.

However this research also had notable limitations in this respect. First, some commentators were possibly 'roped into' interviews, as even though potential commentators were always asked if they wished to participate, users and volunteers may have lacked the confidence to refuse or felt pressurised to conform to workers' or managers' requests. Second, in certain projects, workers and managers were better represented than users or volunteers amongst the commentators, questioning the extent to which less powerful people gained the stronger voice. Third, the projects received only sporadic feedback on the progress of the research, generally due to pressures on time and other resources. Fourth, the intention to feed the completed research findings back into projects' ongoing work was not fulfilled as originally intended, due to the extended timescale of the research and the time-limited natures of the projects. As the project summaries in Appendix One illustrate, only three of the eight projects are still in existence as this thesis is finalised, although continuing contact with participants from seven of the projects meant an opportunity was offered to check the thesis for accuracy and to challenge the researcher's interpretations. Six projects took up this opportunity.

Conclusion

This chapter offered a critical review of the methods used in this empowerment research. Primarily these had to allow for the exploration of empowerment, unlike more traditional evaluative approaches. An emergent design was therefore selected, rooted in a grounded theory approach and based on qualitative methods. Purposive, theoretical and snowball sampling methods were all used to select those projects and commentators who could illustrate most about empowerment conceptualisation and practice.

The research tools were designed with the principles of multiplism in mind, triangulating qualitative interviews, documents and observation to comprehensively explore the complexities and contradictions of empowerment. Whilst interviews were the primary tool, each of these methods had its own strengths and weaknesses, whilst together they provided rich and detailed data to be analysed and interpreted. Finally, although elements of the research were described by commentators as empowering, overall it suffered from many limitations in this respect.

Part One of this thesis has outlined the conceptual and theoretical background to this research, exploring definitions and concepts of empowerment, and outlining the critical relationship between power and empowerment. Empowerment's multi-

dimensionality now begins to be unpacked in Part Two, which examines the Foundations of Empowerment.

PART TWO

**THE
FOUNDATIONS
OF
EMPOWERMENT**

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Part Two explores empowerment's foundations, mapping the background to its continuing popularity as a concept and practice.

Chapter 2.1 first identifies and discusses the deep historical and philosophical roots of empowerment, in particular the politics of protest, community-based approaches to change, and Paulo Freire and the Brazilian model of empowerment. More recent political and ideological trends which have led to its resurgence as an approach on both the right and the left are then outlined.

Chapter 2.2 seeks to contextualise empowerment within the multi-layered settings in which it is practised. Policy, community and organisational contexts are all explored, focusing on ways in which practice interacts with and seeks to change the surrounding cultures and settings.

Chapter 2.3 explores why empowerment is chosen as an objective for practice, and reviews two contrasting aims of people-changing and structure-changing. This chapter ends by highlighting the importance of a shared vision within empowerment practice, through which commonly supported aims can be sought.

2.1 THE ROOTS OF EMPOWERMENT

Introduction

"... the tree [the Project] was planted in fertile soil and its roots are now running across and through the Drumchapel community and its constituent organisations. Securing longer term funding for the Project has given these roots a stable base and the Project is now at a stage where it can support new growth. Like a tree it draws up support for its growth through its strong roots and, in turn having been well tended, it is now giving forth abundant fruit from its many branches" (Co-ordinator of Glasgow Healthy City Project in DCHP Document¹).

As Drumchapel Community Health Project illustrate in their project tree described above,² the image of roots suggests not only tracing the past but also feeding into the present and influencing ongoing growth and direction. Weak roots create vulnerability whilst strong roots act as a solid base. Roots can also become tangled and intertwined in a way which prevents growth and restricts freedom of movement.

The projects studied in this research had a range of immediate roots which explain their creation, such as the identification of unmet need or agency responses to current moral, political and professional agendas. However this chapter explores empowerment's deeper roots as a concept and a practice. Influential historical and philosophical traditions are first discussed, followed by the more recent political and ideological trends which lie behind its current popularity.

The influence of these traditions and trends was not only identified in the creation and direction of the empowerment-based projects, but also in the 'individual baggage' that project participants brought with them. Individuals described how they operated as "feminists", "environmentalists", "socialists" or "community activists", and how they followed the principles of "vocationalism" or "voluntarism" (Interviews, various). In addition, participants brought specialist knowledge and expertise from specific

¹ Kennedy, Aine (1994) Practising 'Health for All' in a Glasgow Housing Scheme - the Drumchapel Healthy Cities Project 1990-92.

² The Project reviewed its whole story using the imagery of a tree with roots (where the Project came from), a trunk (key principles), branches (different areas of work), and leaves (various self-help groups, projects and events which were developed). The Project volunteers designed the tree illustrating all these constituent parts, which came to symbolise the Project and in a single image display its diverse areas of work (Source: Aine Kennedy (1994) Practising 'Health for All' in a Glasgow Housing Scheme - the Drumchapel Healthy Cities Project 1990-92).

traditions, such as community development, radical education, social action and disability rights.

Philosophical and Historical Traditions

"The term 'empowerment' has multiple contemporary meanings, which is not surprising in light of its diverse historical referents" (Evans 1992 p140).

Empowerment is rooted in deep historical and philosophical traditions (Swift 1984), as "though the coinage of the word *empowerment* is relatively recent, the perspective connoted by that term is not" (Simon 1994 pxiii).

The empowerment literature refers to numerous such traditions in which the concept's "psychosocial, political and ethical connotations" (Gibson 1991 p354) are rooted. These include the women's movement (Bachrach and Botwinick 1992; Friedmann 1992; Gibson 1991; Labonte 1991; Rees 1991), alternative Third World/ South development (Friedmann 1992; Scottish Education and Action for Development undated(b); Simon 1990), British and American community development and activism (Berger and Neuhaus 1977; Conroy 1990; Miller and Bryant 1990; Rees 1991; Russell-Erlich and Rivera 1987; Simon 1990; Solomon 1987), rights movements such as disability rights, gay rights and black power (Gibson 1991; Simon 1994; Taylor et al 1992), liberation theology (Simon 1990; Simon 1994), social work (Simon 1990), and the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (Heginbotham 1992; McConnell 1996; O'Gorman 1990; Rees 1991; Rose and Black 1985; Simon 1990; Simon 1994).

In her detailed review of empowerment within American social work, Simon (1994) identifies extensive historical and philosophical roots. She first cites the influence of the Protestant revolution of the 16th and 17th centuries, merchant and industrial capitalism, Jeffersonian democracy, transcendentalism, utopian communities, anarchism, and 18th century notions of citizenship, which together offer "a common cultural stock of themes and ideals about community, liberty, human agency, human possibilities, social institutions like the family and state, mutual aid and citizenship" (p46). She then notes the impact of early and mid-20th century traditions such as populism, the social gospel movement, unionism, feminism, pragmatism, Freudianism, black nationalism, existentialism, Marxism and socialism. Finally late 20th century roots are identified, including Ghandi, Chinese consciousness-raising, African independence movements, Freire, civil rights and black power, 'maximum

feasible participation', liberation theology, the new left, self-help movements, feminism, gay and lesbian liberation and the disability rights movement.

Whilst recognising the influence of all of these historical and philosophical traditions, the significance of three in particular emerged in this empowerment research: protest movements, community-based alternatives, and Paulo Freire and a Brazilian model of empowerment. Whilst these are now outlined independently, areas of convergence and overlap are clear in the key concepts which characterise each.

The Politics of Protest: People Power

The American civil rights movement of the 1950s and 60s provides one of the most memorable examples of people power, whereby citizens attempted to transform oppressive systems from below (Simon 1990; 1994). Such traditional civil rights movements, and more recent single issue campaigns, have influenced empowerment through their promotion of key concepts such as self-expression and self-actualisation (Riessman 1986), collective organisation and networking, education and consciousness-raising, direct action, and user-led (rather than professionally-led) problem-naming and problem-solving. The politics of protest is also premised on the belief that the personal is political (Friedmann 1992; Gibson 1991; Hall 1992; Rees 1991; Ward and Mullender 1991).³

The influence of these key concepts within the advocacy, women's and disability protest movements was particularly identified in this research.

The SAMH Advocacy and Empowerment Group pointed to influential roots in the disability movement (discussed below), but more specifically in the mental health advocacy movement. User-led advocacy has developed rapidly since the mid 1980s (SAMH Document⁴), prompted in particular by community care legislation (Barnes et al 1996), however its historical roots go back to 1960s and 1970s campaigns against psychiatric hospitals organised by groups such as the Mental Patients Union, People Not Psychiatry and the British Network for Alternatives to Psychiatry (Mind 1992; Read and Wallcraft 1992). The movement is now led by organisations such as Survivors Speak Out, who seek to empower individuals who have survived psychiatric treatment through an advocacy approach (Survivors Speak Out, undated). Although SAMH commentators felt they were poorly linked into the contemporary

³ This theme is developed throughout (7.3) Aims of Empowerment (pp83-99).

⁴ Scottish Association for Mental Health (undated) Advocacy and Empowerment - What's it all about?

advocacy movement, the issues they sought to address, and indeed their very existence, demonstrated the continuing impact of these roots.

The influence of the women's movement was noted by Stirling Women and Health Project, who promoted self confidence, skills-building and collective self-help as routes to health (SW&H Document⁵). The use of women's own definitions of health and well-being encouraged alternatives to more traditional medical approaches, as illustrated by their Women's Action Group Stirling (WAGS). Their plans for a health open day included activities such as shiatsu, henna handpainting, aromatherapy, auro soma, keepfit, healthy eating, benefit checks, self defence, and stalls for Zero Tolerance and Traidcraft (fair trade) (SW&H Fieldnotes). However, as with the SAMH Group above, this project's participants were clear that the women's movement provided the roots for the project rather than the current driving force, as "the feminist movement is there somewhere [in the project], but I don't think that's what we're going out to do right now" (SW&H Interview).

The language of empowerment, rights and advocacy were seen as relatively new to the disability movement compared to other 'minority' movements (LCDP Interview), although many of the above key concepts were identified within it. However whilst the above projects saw the advocacy and women's movements as past rather than current active influences, the Lothian Coalition of Disabled People played a central role in the contemporary disability movement through acting as a representative of disabled people in the media and within local government, and having strong links with other user-led disability groups. The Coalition drew from this tradition in campaigning against discriminatory policies and practices premised on medical models of disability as illness, alternatively promoting a social model of disability emphasising rights and equality. This included the promotion of positive images of disabled people to challenge images of weakness and pity, with the Coalition aiming to celebrate their diversity in their first festival of disability (LCDP Fieldnotes). As one founding member explained:

"I saw it very much as a campaigning organisation, ... from just writing a letter to actual more visible protest on the streets, as it were, ... basically tackling discrimination whenever it arose" (LCDP Interview).

Going Local: Community-Based Alternatives

The tradition of community-based development is claimed to provide a concrete setting for the concept of empowerment (Florin and Wandersman 1990). As with

⁵ Stirling Women and Health Project (1991) Annual Report 1990-91.

protest movements, this tradition is characterised by key concepts which are identifiable in current empowerment discourse and practice, although here the focus is on geographical communities rather than communities of interest (Stewart and Taylor 1995). These key concepts include grassroots participation, communities defining their own needs and solutions, the use of indigenous resources, collective rather than individual action, recognition of the inter-relationship of diverse problems, and professionals working with (not doing to) local communities (Conroy 1990; Craig et al 1990; Craig 1995; Rees 1991; Russell-Erlich and Rivera 1987; Simon 1990). In this tradition:

"The empowerment approach ... placed the emphasis on autonomy in the decision-making of territorially organized communities, local self-reliance (but not autarchy), direct (participatory) democracy, and experiential social learning" (Friedmann 1992 pviii).

Community-based alternatives became particularly popular in the 1960s, when the rediscovery of poverty highlighted the shortcomings of traditional and centralised welfare provision (Rees 1991). Over the past decades, community development has alternatively focused on people-changing and structure-changing.⁶ The former is identified in approaches promoting education and skill-building (Baxter 1996), as identified in a "new war on poverty" rooted more in individualism than collective action (Economist 1990 p21). The latter is seen in radical grassroots models such as those promoted by Saul Alinsky (1969; 1972) and the UK Community Development Projects (CDPs)⁷, which used collective organisation and action to highlight unemployment, low incomes and the lack of rights in deprived communities (Benington 1976; Department of the Environment 1977; Scottish Development Department 1978). A more recent example is found in Local Economic Trading Systems (LETs) (North 1996).

All of the projects in this research were rooted in some respects in this community development tradition, which formed the context in which they operated or the approach they followed. Drumchapel Community Health Project demonstrates a particularly strong tradition of community-based alternatives through its roots in the World Health Organisation (WHO) Healthy Cities movement. WHO's model of health promotion seeks to improve holistic health and well-being through "concrete and effective community action", rather than defining health simply as freedom from illness. As WHO's 1986 Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion claimed, "at the heart

⁶ The tension between people-changing and structure-changing is explored throughout (2.3) Aims of Empowerment (pp83-99).

⁷ The CDPs are discussed in (2.3) Aims of Empowerment (Contrasting Aims: People-Changing and Structure-Changing: Empowerment as Structure-Changing, p94).

of this process is the empowerment of communities, their ownership and control of their own endeavors and destinies" (in DCHP Document⁸). The concept of community control over both health services and the local environment is particularly evident in this model (Gibson 1991; Grace 1991). This tradition fed into the Drumchapel project's emphasis on the impact of socio-economic factors on health, their focus on "what the community thought were health issues, as opposed to what politicians or professionals thought" (DCHP Interview), and their search for alternative models of health promotion, such as their use of community health volunteers:

"It's about finding a different way to deliver health promotion. ... Instead of relying on the health promotion stuff coming from HEBS⁹ and the departments, we're actually looking at the community, assessing need" (DCHP Interview).

Paulo Freire and the Brazilian Model

The influence of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire on empowerment theory and practice is widely noted (Kirkwood and Kirkwood 1996; Matthews, 1989; McConnell 1996; Rees 1991; Rose and Black 1985; O'Gorman 1990; Simon 1990; Simon 1994). "The Freire way" continues to be promoted as a practical method for change (Scottish Education and Education on Development undated(a) p11; also Kane 1993), although he is not without his critics (e.g. Berger (1974 in Rees 1991) claims his approach is patronising). Illustrating his international appeal, the founders of the renowned Gorgie Dalry Adult Learners Project in Edinburgh, which uses Freire's radical literacy teaching methods, recalled their realisation that "In spite of the cultural gap between Brazil and Britain, and the difficulty of his language, we knew that Freire was speaking to us" (Kirkwood and Kirkwood 1996 p261).

Key concepts within Freire's work include conscientization, or consciousness-raising; problem-posing education based in individuals' own reality; the interaction between oppressed and oppressor; the roles of active subjects and passive objects; the use of educational literacy to develop political literacy; and the highly influential concept of praxis - a circular process of dialogue, critical reflection and action¹⁰ (Freire 1972a; 1972b). As Rose and Black (1985) explain:

"At the centre of this work is the concept of struggle - of engaging in the work of transforming reality from its present configuration of oppressive,

⁸ Ainé Kennedy (1994) Practising 'Health for All' in a Glasgow Housing Scheme - the Drumchapel Healthy Cities Project 1990-92.

⁹ HEBS is the Health Education Board for Scotland.

¹⁰ This is discussed in detail in (5.2) Steps and Stages in Empowerment (Mapping Steps and Stages, p224).

exploitative conditions to circumstances which allow/ demand human dignity, social justice, meaningful participation of people as human beings in history" (p19).

In addition to this well-documented influence of Freire, this research identified a broader Brazilian influence during early explorations of empowerment's roots, namely the traditions of liberation theology and alternative community development.

Liberation theology, which emerged in Brazil in the 1950s, has been described as "a vibrant and vital source of human empowerment" (Evans 1992 p140) through its promotion of critical reflection as a route to action and social transformation (Evans 1992). Liberation theology promotes a political, indeed radical, interpretation of the scriptures, challenging traditional power bases and hierarchies within the Catholic church and characterising the poor as oppressed rather than needy (Breton 1989). Clergy are encouraged to work with (rather than for) their congregations, and move "out of the pews and the sacristies and into the real world of the marginalised poor" (O'Gorman 1990 p390). Liberation theology is used at local levels within Basic Ecclesiastical Communities (Comunidad Eclesial de Base or CEBs), which act as basic parish structures and combine spiritual development with social transformation (Evans 1992). CEBs promote grassroots development within poor communities, the growth of indigenous resources, lay participation, conscientization, and social, political and economic change (Breton 1989; Evans 1992; O'Gorman 1990). In liberation theology therefore "It is the poor themselves, conscientized and organised, who must become the primary agents of their own liberation" (Breton 1989 p10). At a national level, the declaration of the 1968 Latin American Bishops' Conference of a 'preferential option for the poor' led to the creation of Brazilian pastoral commissions addressing land reform, Indian rights and human rights, with annual campaigns combining theological reflection with socio-economic analysis (Catholic Institute for International Relations 1990; Latin American Bureau 1982).

Brazilian community development originally used the same "imported concepts, techniques and values" as the French and British-influenced African and Middle Eastern models (O'Gorman 1990 p386, also Friedmann 1992; Jazairy 1989; Simon 1990). However grassroots development became seen as necessary to compensate for a lack of state infrastructure and provision, widening inequalities, and a backdrop of state repression, censorship and persecution (Catholic Institute for International Relations 1990; O'Gorman 1990). Together with a unique theological setting and the influence of Paulo Freire, Brazilian community development went through what O'Gorman (1990) terms four "focus shifts": from political neutrality to politicisation;

from development to transformation, as "'pulling oneself up by one's bootstraps' ... didn't work in a society where the poor are poor in order for the rich to keep getting richer" (p390); from self-contained projects to popular movements based on networking and collective organisation; and from product to process. The shifts amounted to an innovative and radical model of development:

"The uniqueness of the Brazilian contribution to community development thinking lies in its dynamic value-oriented response to deepening understanding of day-to-day reality shaped by social, political, economic and cultural forces" (O'Gorman 1990 p387).

When combined with the influence of Paulo Freire, these two additional Brazilian traditions appear to have made a critical impact on those conceptualising and practising empowerment. To explore this collective impact in more detail, and clarify those key concepts which have fed into current empowerment practice, a three week study visit to Brazil was carried out in July 1993. During this visit, empowerment-based groups and initiatives were analysed to identify key concepts in their work and assess how far these amounted to an influential Brazilian model of empowerment. Twenty-nine visits and interviews were carried out with women's groups, children's projects, employment and union initiatives, community organisations, health projects and Church groups, with the fieldwork covering three geographical areas of Brazil: Rio de Janeiro, North Eastern Brazil (Recife and Olinda, Paraiba, and Salvador, Bahia), and the rural Angra dos Reis in Rio state.¹¹

This Brazilian research confirmed not only the influence of the three traditions explored above, but also illustrated their mutual influence and interaction in practice (also noted by Kane 1993; O'Gorman 1990; Simon 1990; Simon 1994). Seven key concepts were identified in practice, rooted within these three traditions and together amounting to an influential Brazilian model of empowerment.

First, the concept of people as active subjects rather than passive objects was commonly noted, with the ultimate responsibility for development lying with individuals, groups and communities, rather than outside professionals or agencies. This reflects Freire's argument that those who are poor must learn to understand and challenge their poverty, rather than accept it (Kane 1993), or as one woman who had developed a local co-operative claimed "That's what we want - that women become agents of change in the life of the community as a whole" (Association of Production Groups Interview).

¹¹ These interviewees and their projects are listed in the Acknowledgements (pp6-7).

Second, collective organisation was seen as superior to individual action, with personal development being encouraged as part of a wider group or community process. During a week-long visit to Japuíba parish, which uses liberation theology principles, the Church was seen to act as a central route into and site for community organising, action and development, with a traditional top-down hierarchical structure being replaced by a collection of CEBs and pastoral groups promoting extensive community participation.

Third, the use of people's current reality as a basis for wider analysis and development was identified. For example one worker at São Martinho Streetchildren's Project argued that income generation had to be recognised as the streetchildren's primary concern, and that "you have to give them an economic future - that is realistic". An educator with another children's project, based in a Rio favela (shanty town), echoed this view that development had to start with the children's current situation:

"You can't take these children and put them in some other place and say, 'Life is different than you think'. ... Their life is here - and they have the kind of life you cannot forget - so starting from that, and building around the bigger oppression in the world, ... building something from what you are" (Solidarity France-Brazil Interview).

Fourth, critical learning and reflection were encouraged, or "empowerment through knowledge". This was believed to build independence for poorer communities, as "if you give them a few tools and show them a few things, they might walk a bit, and then a bit more" (PACS Interview). Such critical reflection was also used within projects to examine blocks and barriers to their development. As one worker claimed, "If the project isn't realised, then it's important to realise why not, and what were the mechanisms that prevented that from happening" (Coohamara Housing Co-operative commentator). Critical learning and reflection were seen as essential to develop alternative political and socio-economic structures, and to understand that local issues and problems had wider roots. As this worker said of his local children's project:

"It also has to involve political formation, because the kids know generally why they're abandoned in the streets, and they don't have a house. It's more that they have to be aware that this is part of a much bigger problem, and they have to be aware of what causes that problem" (Angra dos Reis Children's Project Interview).

Fifth, processes were valued equally to or even above final products or outcomes. Thus projects' aims referred to processes of collective organisation and action as ends in themselves. For example a housing co-operative worker pointed out that their material and physical goals (building houses) were secondary (although still significant), as "the proposal of the co-operative is far more important than actually building houses. It's more about the people being directly involved in participating, in

making decisions" (Coohamara Housing Co-operative Interview). This approach was believed to lead to more sustainable, inclusive and participative development:

"There a big difference between doing something and the way you do it. It's quite easy for the local council to come up with a plan: 1, 2, 3, 4 - it's all there. It's important to make people reflect on why they're involved in the actual process as well" (Angra dos Reis Children's Project Interview).

Sixth there was an emphasis on changing society to liberate people who are poor and oppressed, rather than changing individuals to better fit a corrupt, unjust and extremely unequal status quo.¹² A representative of the Pastoral Land Commission (Comissão Pastoral da Terra: CPT), one of several pastoral commissions established by the Brazilian Church, explained how they use evidence from the scriptures to fight for fairer land distribution and assist local people in illegal land occupations. In his words:

"We try to show God's will from a different angle, from a liberation angle. ... It's just trying to get another view on things, and to be very practical about it, not just holy, holy" (CPT Interview).

Finally the Brazilian projects were characterised by their attempts to maximise indigenous resources. Despite their dependence on external (often foreign) funding sources, these projects were highly reliant on local knowledge, skills and energies. A number of projects trained local people to work as agents, to develop or train others in their community. These projects focused on "forming people who are going on to form other people" (Solidarity France-Brazil Interview). These local agents developed a range of innovative and accessible training and information tools, to overcome low levels of education and literacy, for example using visual aids, drama and games.

This first section has illustrated deep philosophical and historical traditions of empowerment, focusing in particular on the critical influence of protest, community-based alternatives, and Paulo Freire and an associated Brazilian model of empowerment. Each of these traditions has promoted key concepts which can be identified in the contemporary conceptualisation and practice of empowerment.

Ideological and Political Trends

"Over the past 30 years there has been a radical shift in the ideological and political context within which involvement, participation and empowerment have been conducted" (Stewart and Taylor 1995 pv).

¹² As noted earlier, this dimension of people-changing and structure-changing is explored in detail throughout (2.3) Aims of Empowerment (pp83-99).

The second part of this chapter explores more recent political and ideological trends which, together with the historical and philosophical traditions outlined above, have led to empowerment's current popularity as a concept and a practice.

As Stewart and Taylor's comment claims, ideological and political foundations are far from stable, and the rationales for empowerment approaches in the 1960s and 1970s are somewhat different from those identified in the last two decades. However what seems unlikely to wane is empowerment's current, near universal, ideological and political appeal. At the beginning of this decade, Mather (1991) predicted that "Empowerment ... is going to be taken up by Right, Left and Centre and play a key part in the political agenda of the 1990s" (p15), and indeed Gillman (1996) recently claimed that:

"Empowerment seems to have a somewhat 'Janus-like' quality in that it can appear to be both radical and conservative and is indeed, claimed by those at both ends of the political spectrum" (p112).

However, within the relative political consensus that empowerment is an approach with merit, two very different strands can be traced within "an ideological and political minefield" (Colenutt and Cutten 1994 p243): consumerism and citizenship.

The first of these, consumerism, encourages individuals to empower themselves in the welfare marketplace (Baxter 1996; Osborne 1994; Robson et al 1997; Taylor et al 1992). This trend is illustrated by Thatcherite reforms, such as the spreading of public share ownership and the introduction of privatisation and market forces in health and welfare. Market structures and tools have become standard in public services, although their aims can be as much quality assurance as profit or privatisation (Benington 1996; Taylor et al 1992). Within the private sector too, consumerist interpretations of empowerment have been embraced, as illustrated within this magazine advertisement for Mercantile Credit:

"Empower yourself with the money you need now. ... For a fast decision just pick up the phone or post the coupon ... and just see how it feels to be empowered" (Mercantile Credit August 1996).

This ideology promotes active citizenship, as exercised through individual rights and responsibilities. The previous Major government's Citizen's and associated charters (Osborne 1994; Taylor et al 1992), and New Labour's brand of Christian socialism both embody this concept. Politically too, consumerism is represented in the shift from class-based politics to a politics of identity and the popularity of single issue agendas (Williams 1992). Within the public sector, consumerism suggests contract-based accountability whereby "empowerment ... gives citizens rights to compensation

and redress if the standards specified in public service contracts are not met" (Mather 1991 p11), or as the Adam Smith Institute explain:

"The extension of consumer rights which give citizens real and measurable powers over the state services ... is called for brevity by the name 'empowerment'. ... Empowerment can lead to better state health care, shorter waiting lists, improved state education, better rail services, more responsive local authority departments" (Pirie 1991 p1).

Again this interpretation is identifiable within the private sector, with a Marriott Hotels' advertisement claiming that "Everyone at Marriott works this way. Personally assuming responsibility of the needs of every guest. It's called Empowerment" (in *The Independent* on Sunday 2.5.93). In summary, consumerist trends in empowerment integrate concepts of individual responsibility, thrift and hard work with market principles of effectiveness and efficiency (Rees 1991).

The second ideological strand identified in empowerment's current popularity represents concepts of democracy and equity, in response to social inequality and alienation from the democratic process (Martin 1996; Rees 1991; Wheeler 1996). In this way government is seeking to revitalise local democracy through decentralising service delivery and decision-making structures (Benington 1996) as much as strategies for empowerment as administrative structures (Servian 1996). This strand is identified by Taylor (1995) as the weaker of the two in terms of contemporary influence.

Collective and social (rather than individual) citizenship rights are emphasised here, such as the right to employment, good housing, education and an adequate income. This championing of social and political rights represents a return to post-war welfare concerns, as promoted within T H Marshall's conceptualisation of social citizenship (Alcock et al 1996). Single issue and user-led movements, which call for a strengthening of rights within areas such as disability, mental health, the environment and housing, illustrate this strand of empowerment in contemporary practice. As this commentator from the Lothian Coalition of Disabled People states:

"We think it's important for disabled people to be encouraged to make demands, ... and to get away from the language of charity. I think that is an empowering thing; if you can begin to continually talk in the language of rights it helps people perceive their own particular situation differently, that they are not the problem" (LCDP Interview).

Within the empowerment literature, these two ideological strands of market consumerism and social citizenship tend to be identified at opposing ends of the political spectrum (e.g. Ward and Mullender 1991). For example Morley (1995) complains that the adoption of empowerment by the right means "the word

empowerment has lost its radical, politicised roots" (p1) as the language and "not necessarily the ideology" (p1) is embraced. Similarly McConnell (1996) argues that empowerment is promoted as a route to individualism, consumerism, enterprise and self help by the right, and as a route to citizenship rights and equality of opportunity by the left.

However right and left "increasingly use a common language that tends to obscure fundamentally different ideologies" (Wheeler 1996 p6), and certainly the Blair government's agenda appears to suggest such simplistic distinctions are now less than helpful. For example conservative legislation and policy which aimed to encourage consumerism and user involvement in community care, health, and education remains more or less unchallenged, and the generally left-leaning voluntary and community sectors continue to adopt more "commercial management thinking" (Robson et al 1997 p2). Whilst the left now see consumerism as one route to local democratic accountability (Berry 1988a), the right see the concept as challenging state bureaucracy and 'producer capture' (Pirie 1991). Similarly the concept of citizenship can be identified in the language and ideology of both right and left, as whilst the right speak of self help and moral obligations, the left note issues of rights and equity (Andrews 1991).

The critical point is therefore not the political distinction, but rather the political unity around empowerment rhetoric, despite the contradictions and tensions between different ideological strands. Thus those who are excluded from consumerist, market approaches to empowerment, due to increases in insecurity, anxiety, poverty, inequality and powerlessness, are most often the target of citizenship, rights-based developments which seek to redress the inequalities of such markets (Martin 1996; Alcock et al 1996). In addition, those promoting social, rights-based approaches have to operate within a wider organisational structure of market forces and individualism.

This 'dual ideology' not only confuses those trying to practice empowerment but is also blamed for creating an atmosphere of mistrust amongst service users who hear the language of one approach yet experience another (Chaney 1997; Morley 1995). For example Stirling Youth Action Project found the use of empowerment rhetoric occurred alongside increasing social exclusion:

"They (young people) are being forced more and more onto the street. ... There's fewer and fewer places for young people to meet together. There's an increasing drive in most communities to manage crime, control crime, ... there are security guards, and there are cameras that survey the area, and everybody feels safe, and the young people are often evicted or kept out. So they find themselves more and more on the edges, geographically on the edges" (SYAP Interview).

Conclusion

This first chapter in Part Two has identified and explored the roots of empowerment, mapping out where the concept and practice of empowerment has come from and seeking to explain its current popularity.

Historical and philosophical traditions were first identified, with this research noting the influence of three traditions in particular: protest movements, the search for community-based alternatives, and Paulo Freire and a Brazilian model of empowerment. The impact of these comes from the key concepts which characterise them and which feed into concepts and practices of empowerment.

More recent ideological and political trends were then outlined, highlighting the impact of two contrasting ideological strands of market consumerism and social citizenship in empowerment's current popularity as an approach. The tensions between these two approaches have been heightened for those working with empowerment amidst a relative political consensus.

This setting of empowerment's foundations now continues by contextualising the concept in practice.

2.2 CONTEXTUALISING EMPOWERMENT

Introduction

"Empowerment will not only look different depending on what sort of problems one is confronting, but it may even look different in each setting that it operates" (Rappaport 1981 p17).

This chapter seeks to contextualise empowerment, or rather examine the settings in which the concept is practised and identify their effects. Humphries (1996) argues that "understanding empowerment requires that we take into consideration the social, political and historical context within which discourses about empowerment take place" (p31). Similarly Rose and Black (1985) criticise acontextual analyses of empowerment, recommending that historical, organisational, political and economic contexts are acknowledged, and claiming that such contexts "may prove to be the single most important influence determining program direction, success or failure" (p161). Thus empowerment may be "context specific" (Chavis and Wandersman 1990 p74), with an individual feeling empowered in some contexts but not others, or as Fawcett et al (1994) explain:

"Empowerment status may differ across domains. A person empowered in one context, such as the family, may have little control over important events in other aspects of life, such as in the neighbourhood or workplace" (p474).

The earlier exploration of the Roots of Empowerment examined historical and political/ ideological contexts as traditions and trends. This chapter focuses on projects' more immediate and contemporary contexts in the form of policies, local communities and organisations. These are explored in turn, focusing in particular on the interaction between context and practice, reflecting Zimmerman's (1990b) claim that empowerment involves an interaction between an individual and their environment "that is culturally and contextually defined" (p170). This chapter ends by questioning how far projects can change the contexts within which they operate.

Policy Contexts

Empowerment theory and practice can be identified in many areas of policy. For example a special (1996) edition of 'Local Government Policy Making' on empowerment and citizenship reviewed empowerment in relation to anti-poverty

strategies (Alcock et al 1996), communitarianism (Tam 1996), decentralisation (Gaster 1996), education (Martin 1996), the environment and sustainability (S Young 1996), European developments (Chanan 1996), health and social care (Barnes et al 1996), organisational management (Stott and Simpson 1996) and transport (Root 1996).

Within the wider empowerment literature this contextual diversity expands further, as illustrated in Table 2. Here a variety of policy contexts are related both to the eight projects and to selected key texts. It offers by no means an exhaustive summary, but rather illustrates empowerment's broad reach and universal appeal or, as Simon (1990) claims, its "salience to the explicit missions" of some contexts and "enduring centrality to the ideology" of others (p27).

Table 2: Policy Contexts of Empowerment

Policy Context	Projects	Selected Key Examples from the Literature
Community care	SAMH, EP	Hoyes et al 1993; Servian 1996; Stevenson and Parsloe 1993; Taylor et al 1992
Community development	All projects	Barr 1995a; Bryant and Holmes 1996; Craig et al 1990
Community education	FCLD, SCL	Barr et al 1996; Chaney 1997; McConnell 1996
Community psychology	FCLD	Simon 1990; Wolff 1987; Zimmerman and Rappaport 1988
Disability	LCDP	Barnes and Mercer 1995; Dailly 1992; Herd 1995a; Morris 1995
Education	FCLD, SCL	Burrage 1991; Gibson 1991; Gruber and Trickett 1987; Martin 1996
Health promotion	DCHP, SW&H	Duncan and Cribb 1996; Grace 1991; Labonte 1991
Housing	-	Cairncross et al 1992; Clapham 1992
Learning disability	LCDP	Whittell 1993
LETS ¹	-	North 1996
Local government	All projects except SAMH & EP	Alcock et al 1996; Clarke and Stewart 1992a, 1992b; Gaster 1996.
Management	FCLD (training)	Johnson 1992; Morley 1995; Newmark 1995; Osborne 1994
Mental health	SAMH	MIND 1992; Read and Wallcraft 1992; Rose and Black 1985; Scottish Association for Mental Health undated
Nursing and health care	DCHP, EP, SW&H	Barnes et al 1996; Craig 1995; Gibson 1991; Grace 1991; Simon 1990
Older people	EP	Age Concern Scotland 1995; Ahlquist 1997; Barnes and Walker 1996; Dyer 1994; Thursz et al 1995
Organisational development and training	SAMH, FCLD, LCDP	Betof and Harwood 1992; Clutterbuck 1995; Foy 1994; Kirkpatrick 1992; Newmark 1995; Stott and Simpson 1996

¹ Local Exchange and Trading Systems.

Planning	-	Davidson 1998
Regeneration	FCLD	McGregor et al 1992; Stewart and Taylor 1995; Shragge 1993; Stoecker 1997a and 1997b
Social action	DCHP, LCDP, SYAP	Keenan and Pinkerton 1988; Mondros and Wilson 1994
Social work	LCDP	Adams 1990; Barr and Cochran 1992; Berry 1988b; Darvill and Smale 1990; Lee 1994; Pinderhughes 1983; Simon 1994; Solomon 1987
Theology	-	Evans 1992; MacLeod, undated
User involvement	All projects ²	Croft and Beresford 1990; Pugh and Richards 1996; Robson et al 1997
Voluntary sector	All projects ³	Matthews 1989; Prestby et al 1990; Robson et al 1997
Youth services	SYAP	Keenan and Pinkerton 1988; Morley 1995

Such a diverse policy context directly influences the wide range of methods used in empowerment practice. For example Wilcox (1994) identifies within participation and empowerment approaches, techniques developed in the contexts of management, research, education, development and conflict resolution. Within the projects such diverse influences were also noted, as in the Foundation for Community Leadership Development's identification of community development, humanistic psychology and the private sector as contextualising their work:

"The materials that will be offered therefore lie within a sort of no-man's-land between counselling, action learning, experiential education and training for which we as yet have no adequate word" (FCLD Document⁴).

Interaction with Policy Contexts

Commentators reported both positive and negative effects of their policy contexts on their practice. Positively, the Lothian Coalition of Disabled People found themselves in a strong position to respond to local authorities' legislative requirements to consult service users within community care policies. Similarly Drumchapel Community Health Project sought to act as a community voice for the Health Board following the introduction of health service locality planning.

Conversely health, community care and social security policies were identified by Empowerment Project commentators as restricting their work. First their aim of lessening patients' financial poverty was limited by national social security regulations, which prescribed fixed and limited benefits for those in long stay care.

² User involvement is discussed in detail throughout (3.3) Types of Involvement (pp137-162).

³ This context is discussed later in this chapter (Organisational Contexts, The Voluntary Sector, p80).

⁴ FCLD (1989) Lothian Community Leadership Fund Urban Aid Application.

Project input was therefore limited to offering benefits advice for patients and relatives. Second, project participants claimed that building stronger relationships between nursing staff and other ward participants was extremely difficult as the National Health Service increasingly embraced market forces and techniques. For example the increasing use of flexible (temporary) contracts and agency staff was believed to reduce the continuity of patient care and staff commitment to new initiatives (such as the project). Third, community care policies proposed the possible closure of the hospital as patients moved to smaller community units, creating uncertainty and anxiety amongst all ward participants. Fourth, the Care of the Elderly Unit's application for NHS trust status was blamed by some participants for the Health Board partners' enthusiasm for spreading only good news and their reluctance to take risks.⁵ Together these set a broad policy context where the project's priorities were overshadowed by others' concerns, for example where "they [nursing staff] have got legitimate fears, legitimate worries, because people have got their own perception of what's happening in this Unit and what's happening in the hospital" (EP Interview).

The Local Community Context

Labonte (1991) differentiates initiatives which are based on community development from those based in communities. In this research there was an equal split between projects which used community development techniques (EP, SAMH, FCLD and LCDP), and those which were additionally focused on local communities (SCL, DCHP, SW&H and SYAP). However all the projects were geographically situated within towns or cities, which acted as their local community contexts. These formed the social, political and economic setting for projects' work and provided a 'market' of project users and issues. Commentators were adamant that projects needed to be aware of and understand their local contexts, and criticised provision which seemingly ignored local needs and demands or negatively impacted upon local areas.

The projects covered four geographical communities within central Scotland: Edinburgh (FCLD, LCDP); Glasgow (SAMH, EP, DCHP); Greenock (SCL) and Stirling (SYAP, SW&H).

⁵ Risk-taking is discussed in detail in (4.3) Blocks and Barriers in Empowerment ("Hitting Your Head Off a Brick Wall": Failing to Effect Change, "Watching Your Back": Fear of Risk-Taking, pp202-3).

Edinburgh

The Foundation for Community Leadership Development and the Lothian Coalition of Disabled People served Lothian Region as a whole, however both were based in the capital city of Edinburgh and concentrated their work there. Therefore while FCLD delivered training across the central belt and the Coalition had local groups representing each district of Lothian (Edinburgh, East, West, and Midlothian), Edinburgh City acted as their local community context.

Both projects focused on communities of interest, rather than geographic communities, although FCLD's urban programme funding meant its training was particularly targeted towards activists and organisations within eligible areas, such as Wester Hailes, Pilton and Craigmillar. However their geographic siting in Edinburgh was seen as significant to both projects. FCLD secured levels of political (and consequently financial) support in the East of Scotland which they found they could not attract in the West, and argued that Edinburgh offered a supportive context for their personal development approach to training in part because it acts as the Scottish base for counselling and psychodynamic training. Similarly the Lothian Coalition of Disabled People found relatively high levels of political (and financial) support in the city, with the regional council seen as particularly supportive of their aims. However equally significant to them, with the city being the centre of the regional authority, largest district authority, Scottish Office and much of the Scottish media, the Coalition believed their location made them well-placed to access those with power and influence over policy and practice.

Glasgow

Three projects were situated within different parts of the city of Glasgow: the city centre, east end and north west.

The SAMH Advocacy and Empowerment Group, based in Glasgow city centre, was targeted towards current and former users of mental health services across the west of Scotland, although most of its members came from the Glasgow area. Commentators felt that this local context had little impact, beyond providing members with some experience of other disability and mental health organisations, such as Glasgow LINK, the Glasgow Association for Mental Health, Glasgow Coalition of Disabled People, and SAMH's own training organisation, TEXT.

The Empowerment Project was situated in a hospital in Glasgow's east end, an area with a long history of community activity and organisation. However commentators noted that the hospital was relatively isolated from this wider community, despite many of the patients being local residents. The project too was relatively isolated within both the hospital and the community, and despite developing some links with local schools and churches it was never community-based as such.

In contrast, Drumchapel Community Health Project is strongly rooted in its local community context. Drumchapel is a 1950s peripheral housing scheme in north west Glasgow, characterised by widespread poverty and deprivation. The population of the neighbouring, affluent suburb of Bearsden have on average a life expectancy ten years greater than their Drumchapel counterparts (DCHP Documents⁶). The scheme has a long history of community development work, supporting a wide range of initiatives, such as credit unions, LETs schemes, community businesses, and other groups and projects. The project stemmed from and became part of this well-established context, itself providing services, facilitating networks and creating joint forums for local people, community groups and agencies.

Greenock

Second Chance Learning is based in the Strone area of Greenock, on the west of Scotland's Clyde coast. The project has a second, smaller base in neighbouring Gibshill. Strone and Gibshill are both remote from Greenock town centre, being situated on a hillside east of the town and not easily accessible on foot. Both are characterised by extensive poverty, with the 1991 Census ranking Gibshill amongst the most deprived areas in Strathclyde (SCL Document⁷). Although employment opportunities are being attracted into the town following the demise of traditional heavy industries, such as shipbuilding and manufacturing, the local population is identified as having inappropriate skills and qualifications for these new service industries (SCL Document⁸).

⁶ Kennedy, Aine (undated) Health for All: from principles to practice in Drumchapel; Drumchapel Community Health Project (1995) Annual Report 1994/5.

⁷ McIntosh, Neil (undated) Inverclyde Areas of Deprivation: Report by Chief Executive, Strathclyde Regional Council Inverclyde Local Committee.

⁸ McIntosh, Neil (undated) Inverclyde Areas of Deprivation: Report by Chief Executive, Strathclyde Regional Council Inverclyde Local Committee.

Strone and Gibshill have a long history of community activism, which commentators identified as critical in both Second Chance's initial creation (via the community organisation SMIEP⁹) and its ongoing strong community roots.

Stirling

The town of Stirling in central Scotland provided a base for the remaining two projects: the Youth Action Project and Women and Health Project. Both were funded to work with four communities identified by the local authorities as Areas of Need: Raploch, Cornton, Cultenhove and Top of the Town. The first three areas are outwith the town centre and act as relatively self-contained communities, with all four having little inter-neighbourhood community activism.

Although these areas suffer from nothing like the scale of cities' poor housing quality and urban decay, they do represent significant pockets of deprivation, unemployment and low pay amidst the wider locality's relative affluence. Commentators also noted that, relative to Edinburgh and Glasgow, Stirling was characterised by a lack of urban programme provision, limited inter-agency working and a tendency for community organisations to be service-providing rather than campaigning. The town's "village atmosphere" (SYAP Interview) caused significant problems for the Stirling Women and Health Project at one stage, when disgruntled former staff reportedly began a local 'whispering campaign' against them:

And of course that's a problem with somewhere like Stirling. It's a small place. ... The project has suffered from that" (SW&H Interview).

Interaction with Community Contexts

"Being rooted in the community and based in the community, difficult as it is at times, it just opens up other avenues. It does make a huge difference" (SCL Interview).

Local community contexts were identified as interacting with projects in four ways.

First, communities' histories were seen by commentators as critical, helping to explain why certain approaches work in some areas but not others. For example in Stirling, Raploch was described as "worked to death by services, but not in an empowering way. [It's been] very much a 'This is what's good for you - take it or leave it' sort of thing" (SYAP Interview). This history made local people suspicious and cynical of local authority initiatives, with the projects' status as a voluntary organisation

⁹ Strone and Maukenhill Information and Education Project.

considered advantageous by commentators. However in the neighbouring community of Cornton, where a more positive history of local authority work was identified, commentators argued that strong links with statutory provision were advantageous and offered opportunities for effective partnership working.

Second, communities influenced the approaches and issues taken up by projects. For example Drumchapel Community Health Project aimed to tap into community issues and energies, by relying on a minimal staff base and a larger team of local Community Health Volunteers (CHVs). The CHVs had a defining influence on the project by identifying local issues and shaping activities around these. Provision consequently focused on community concerns such as asthma, post-natal depression, men's health, and child safety at home and in play areas, rather than more traditional health promotion topics addressing behaviour and lifestyle. As one of the CHVs explained:

"It was actually the people who became the volunteers who were telling the project what the problems were. I mean, everybody in the project is well aware that smoking's bad for you, and you're overweight, and your diet's not great, but there's a lot of factors why we do smoke and we do over eat and we don't eat a healthy diet" (DCHP Interview).

Third, community contexts were identified as blocking project developments through offering little support or being openly hostile. For example the creation of the Foundation for Community Leadership Development reportedly threatened individuals and groups delivering similar personal development training locally:

"Setting up an institution which was going to try and offer training and leadership to the three peripheral estates in Edinburgh, you were standing on the toes of the community education empire - that's very much their job. Similarly the Edinburgh counselling group or network, they are again very jealously envious of anyone that sticks their head up" (FCLD Interview).

FCLD found the initial demand for their courses was lower than predicted, suggesting they had "seriously underestimated the gap" between Scottish community development practice and their own "self realization" materials and tools (FCLD Interview). These were largely American imports, taken from Steiner, community organisation, coalition-building, and personal effectiveness movements. Whilst seen by FCLD as "sophisticated and powerful" (FCLD Interview), the difficulty "in translating those modes of speech and language and conceptual approaches from a Californian context to a central belt Scotland post-industrial society" (FCLD Interview) meant that ultimately their approach was seen locally as "wacky" or "way out" (FCLD Interview):

"I think one of the worst mistakes the foundation made was the naïveté about the Scottish reaction, especially working class reaction, to American therapy culture" (FCLD Interview).

Fourth and finally, conflict and prejudice within communities was felt to limit projects' reach. For example despite the commonalities of Greenock's Strone and Gibshill communities, Second Chance Learning found each has strong "tribal boundaries" (SCL Interview), making local residents unwilling to use neighbouring facilities. Thus for Second Chance "one of the biggest challenges that remains is getting people through that front door" (SCL Interview), by overcoming such fears. Stirling Youth Action Project similarly found young people viewed neighbouring areas as "hostile territory" (SYAP Document¹⁰), attempting to challenge their views by bringing together young people from the neighbouring communities of Borestone and Cultenhove to plan and deliver a three week summer activities programme. Elsewhere in Stirling, the Women and Health Project found local women were loathe to attend groups or events outwith their own local area, limiting possible provision: "They're so territorial! If you're going into one place, you have to go and book another venue, because that one won't put her foot in the community centre, and all this carry on!" (SW&H Interview).

Organisational Contexts

The projects generally shared two broad organisational contexts: local government and the voluntary sector. These are first outlined before more generally discussing interaction with organisational contexts.

Local Government

All but two of the projects were operating within the organisational context of local government, for example through urban programme or other funding arrangements, supervision or line management, and partnership working.¹¹

Alcock et al (1996) argue that over the last two decades, local authorities have responded to "the apparent failure of central government to be prepared to tackle the twin problems of poverty and empowerment in our increasingly divided society"

¹⁰ Martin, Ruth; Callaghan, Frances and Ross, Veronica (1994) Partnership in Practice: A Joint Report on St Ninian's Summer Activities for Teenagers '94, Stirling Youth Action Project and Central Regional Council Community Education Service.

¹¹ The exceptions here are the SAMH Advocacy and Empowerment Group and the Empowerment Project.

(p42). Their response has particularly involved developing community-based projects and strategies, including the social strategies of the 1990s which promoted the empowerment of individuals and groups (e.g. Central Regional Council 1991; Strathclyde Regional Council 1993). Such local government approaches contrast with central government programme such as the Scottish Office Partnerships which, whilst also talking of community empowerment, focus more closely on regenerating local housing and infrastructure, working with the business community (McGregor et al 1992; Scottish Office 1988), and promoting "access to jobs ... as the route to empowerment" (Stewart and Taylor 1995 p7).

Commentators felt their local government context was of some benefit, as councils were promoting some innovative and good work, could act as political allies and protectors, and contained key individuals who acted as resources to projects. However from the perspective of their own small, self-contained, and labour-intensive initiatives, commentators were also critical of what they saw as local government's bureaucracy, red tape, internal organisational tensions, traditional and inflexible working practices and philosophies.

The Voluntary Sector

The projects also shared membership of the voluntary sector, described by Zimmerman and Rappaport (1988) as "a natural context for studying empowerment" (p726). Knight's (1994) identification of seven voluntary sector characteristics reflects the projects' background: organisations' independent beginnings, self-governing structures, independence from other organisations, independent finance, volunteer involvement, worthwhile purpose, and not-for-profit bases. Florin and Wandersman (1990) additionally suggest voluntary organisations are geographically-based, volunteer-driven, locally initiated, operate on a human and informal scale, and focus on problem-solving. Robson et al (1997) claim it is their value base which differentiates the voluntary sector, such as caring for others, mutual help, and empowerment and equality.

Commentators noted that membership of the voluntary sector offered flexibility and freedom, networking opportunities, and the chance to do creative and pioneering work. However they also identified, particularly in the small-scale community sector, a lack of power and resources in an increasingly competitive environment whereby "people have fought each other" (SCL Interview) to secure their share:

"We're all going for the one lump sum of money. ... Community projects have got to be aware that we'll be your friend today, but tomorrow well just forget it. You've got to take that on board" (SCL Interview).

Interaction with Organisational Contexts

Although the projects were relatively self-contained, all worked within or with other organisations for the purposes of funding, management or supervision, partnership working, or staffing. The level of interaction with these wider organisational contexts varied considerably.

For example the SAMH Advocacy and Empowerment Group were funded by the Scottish Association for Mental Health and used their training room as a base. However commentators argued the group remained relatively isolated from its parent organisation, who "never really did anything to help. They gave us a room and that was it", leaving the trainees feeling that "We could have been in the Bahamas!" (SAMH Interviews). Together with weak links with the wider mental health and advocacy movements, this left the group "very self contained", "isolated", and "its own organisation" (SAMH Interviews). This helps to explain the group's failure to survive after their single year of funding, as they were young, poorly networked, relatively unknown, and had little status or power, even within their parent organisation.

In contrast, commentators from Drumchapel Community Health Project identified strong organisational links with the relatively powerful Greater Glasgow Health Board (GGHB). The project co-ordinator and health visitor posts were GGHB secondments and senior GGHB personnel played management and advisory roles. Commentators emphasised that this offered some political and financial protection, although tensions arose between GGHB's promotion of medicalised health provision and the project's methods, such as health visitors' community development (rather than traditional caseload) approach and volunteers' more confrontational campaigning methods. Such strong links were not replicated with the local authority, leaving the project vulnerable when urban programme funding (which paid for the development worker and administrator posts) was reviewed following local government reorganisation.

Commentators noted interaction with organisational cultures rather than structures, particularly where cultures clashed. For example the Empowerment Project believed they initially misread the health service culture within which they worked, and "actually underestimated the ... political differences, the social differences between the different groups" involved (EP Interview). The health service partners viewed the project's culture as woolly, intellectual and "idealistic" (EP Interview), predicting

project staff would have difficulty "getting alongside [nursing] staff" (EP Interview). The project claimed the ward was characterised by a "culture of negativity" (EP Interview) and stereotyping between patients, relatives and staff. Their aim of building partnerships between these groups seemed overambitious within a seemingly impersonal and institutionalised ward where opportunities for interaction appeared neither sought nor encouraged (EP Fieldnotes).

Empowerment Project commentators also identified a blame culture, within which research on the ward was blamed for misrepresenting participants; staff felt blamed for speaking out; the health service managers felt blamed for their organisational culture, and they themselves blamed the Empowerment Project staff for the overall lack of progress (EP Interviews, EP Fieldnotes). Together with its task-based focus and hierarchical structure, the ward culture seemed unreceptive to the project. This divide existed throughout the project, with one commentator noting that "The cultural barriers have never been transcended because we never thrashed them out" (EP Interview). Whilst the project's conceptualisation of empowerment involved challenging and changing this culture, there was extreme resistance to any such shift:

"As we begun to raise issues about policy, the resistance would get greater and greater and greater. I felt the shades of Erving Goffman move through me as I listened. She [health service manager] said, 'If we go down the way you're going we would have to completely change nursing culture.' I said, 'Well, that's an interesting comment'." (EP Interview).

Changing Cultures and Contexts

As the above example illustrates, one objective of empowerment practice is to challenge and change cultures and contexts, rather than merely drawing from them or being located within them in a very passive way.¹² Thus projects are engaged in a two-way process of taking from or embedding into existing cultures or contexts, which then adapt in response.

All of the projects were attempting to effect contextual or cultural change to some degree. For example the Lothian Coalition of Disabled People was launched into what they identified as a culture of charitable, paternalistic and service-based disability work, with few local, disability-led, rights-based alternatives. The Coalition helped to change this context, both through their own work and through creating a number of other disability-led and disability-oriented initiatives, such as Grapevine Information

¹² Such change is also discussed as structure-changing in (2.3) Aims of Empowerment (Contrasting Aims: People-Changing and Structure-Changing, Empowerment as Structure-Changing, pp95-9).

Service, the Lothian Centre for Integrated Living, and Access Ability (educational brokerage). Similarly, Second Chance Learning attempted to change a local culture of resentment between two neighbouring but rival communities (discussed earlier), by creating educational provision in both areas and encouraging students to use both bases.

The projects demonstrated that they could influence some change even in hostile contexts and cultures. For example the Foundation for Community Leadership Development claimed their introduction of new training tools and methods had slowly effected change in Scottish community development practice, despite the initial hostility of this context to their imported approaches:

"I think probably one of the key things that we've brought to the scene has been an understanding of a bigger picture, or the ability to transfer ideas and practices and tools developed elsewhere into the Scottish context. I've often described us as a bridge. We're a bridge ideally for two-way traffic, but the traffic has mainly been introducing new approaches, ideas into the Scottish scene. And as they come across the bridge we try and refine them and tailor them to Scottish needs and sensitivities" (FCLD Interview).

Despite such positive examples, it is questionable how far small-scale projects can effect wider cultural and contextual change. Locally-based and locally-funded initiatives do target resources on the poorest areas, however the focus on one area can mean problems shift elsewhere, money and facilities are duplicated, impacts remain limited, areas compete according to geographical differences rather than uniting on social similarities, there is little incentive to co-ordinate investment or effort, and overall "small area problems cannot be solved in small areas" (SCL Document¹³).

Within the literature, these limitations are frequently identified. In his critique of such area-based initiatives, Townsend (1976) claims that they reinforce isolation, dependence and inequality by labelling areas and consequently discouraging investment. Benington (1976) also argues that the larger "map of inequality" is ignored by identifying "isolated pockets of social malaise" (p12). Stoecker's (1997a) critique of local community development corporations states that even though these are too small and poorly resourced to significantly reduce local deprivation, they are nevertheless blamed for failures in regeneration. Additionally they rely too heavily on external resources, exhibit little community control, and help to disorganise rather than organise poor communities by encouraging competition and undermining existing networks of organisation. Local approaches have also been criticised for their

¹³ McIntosh, Neil (undated) Inverclyde Areas of Deprivation: Report by Chief Executive, Strathclyde Regional Council Inverclyde Local Committee.

lack of innovation and tendency to "always seem to be wishing to reinvent the wheel" (Young 1996 p160).

Thus although projects had some opportunity to change contexts and cultures (and indeed had some success), it seems wider cultures are not radically challenged by small, time-limited, geographically-based projects. As Brown (1990) claims, "Small may be beautiful, but it may also be insignificant" (in Labonte 1991 p34). Policy, community and organisational contexts more often than not lead practice, rather than the reverse:

"There was enough realism around to know that we couldn't set the agenda that we were going to work to. Even seven years down the road we're still not in the position where we can set the agenda, we still can't be proactive, we've got to be reactive" (LCDP Interview).

Conclusion

Empowerment practice is carried out within multi-layered and complex contexts of policy, locality and organisation. Some projects enjoyed strong links with these wider contexts, whilst others remained isolated, and likewise certain contexts were deemed beneficial whilst others were more hostile and problematic.

The challenge for empowerment practice is to operate smoothly within these sometimes unpredictable and rapidly changing contexts, to use contexts and cultures to one's advantage rather than detriment, and to try to influence or change contexts in one's favour. Ultimately there appears to be no perfect context in which to practice empowerment, or rather "It's very hard to know what is the best environment in which to generate an empowering change" (EP Interview).

2.3 AIMS OF EMPOWERMENT

Introduction

As noted earlier, each of the projects selected for this research had empowerment as a stated aim or objective.

This chapter first explores why empowerment is chosen as an aim in practice. Two contrasting aims of empowerment, people-changing and structure-changing, are then discussed, asking why people want to practice empowerment. Finally the importance of sharing aims within a single vision is highlighted.

Why Aim to Empower?

Within the empowerment literature, a number of writers discuss the motives behind specific methods of empowerment, such as participation and user involvement (Barnes and Walker 1996; Berry 1988b; Croft and Beresford 1988a; 1990), with many displaying considerable cynicism. For example Barnes and Walker (1996) argue that structures for user involvement are developed more to help service providers than users, whilst Croft and Beresford (1988a; 1990) suggest that user views may be sought to legitimise services rather than shift power relationships.

Most cynicism is directed towards government attempts to promote empowerment. For example the 1960's American Community Action Programs are described as "a charade, an exhilarating intellectual game whose players never understood the nature of power and the reluctance of those who have to share it" (Clark and Hopkins 1968 pvi). Closer to home, the Scottish Office-led urban regeneration partnerships introduced by 'New Life for Urban Scotland' promised to seek "the full understanding, involvement and commitment of the local community" (Scottish Office 1988 p8), however local people claimed here empowerment seemed to mean "being told by departments what is going to happen" (Castlemilk Umbrella Group 1988 p4), with the community remaining very much the weaker partner:

"There is an assumption in the Partnership that some 'really important' things have to be pushed on without being able to 'wait for the community to catch up'. But in fact the community is often waiting somewhere else, at a different place, for resources that never arrive" (Castlemilk Umbrella Group 1989, no page no.).

More positive interpretations of empowerment's aims can however be identified. For example Jones (1992) claims empowerment-based participatory health initiatives aim to extend democracy, improve health through increased control, shape solutions around local needs and issues, and create new resources such as energy and commitment. Willow (1997) identifies three positive "cases" for children's participation: improved services, stronger democracy and new knowledge and skills (the political case); the chance to exercise legal rights (the legal case); and the promotion of citizenship rights (the social case). Finally McGregor et al (1992) argue that community involvement within regeneration initiatives has helped to safeguard development and extend decentralisation, offered alternative models of welfare (such as community-based housing), created local employment, and channelled local energies.

Crucially, users and other participants may identify very different aims of empowerment. Hallett (1987) for example claims that whilst users may aim to increase their power and influence over a policy or service, providers may be seeking legitimisation, public support and greater power and resources (by exploiting user support). Such contrasting aims are also identifiable within individual agencies, with Ronald Young (1996) claiming empowerment is sought both as "a deliberate or unconscious attempt to ensure a more orderly acceptance of the agency's policies and services" and as "a genuine desire to shift the balance of political power" (p162).

The projects participating in this research shared a stated objective of empowerment, but similarly illustrated contrasting interpretations of this aim. In some cases empowerment was simply an inherited aim and there was no active selection. For example Drumchapel Community Health Project inherited the three World Health Organisation (WHO) 'Health for All' principles of empowerment, participation and collaboration, being a WHO Healthy Cities project.¹

Overall, projects demonstrated five reasons for choosing their aim of empowerment.

First, empowerment was perceived to offer a multi-dimensional and comprehensive approach to change, which recognised the role of power. For example, the Empowerment Project realised that only partnership working between patients, relatives and nursing staff and an emphasis on active participation would address the

¹ Note that in such cases, the projects had decided to actively promote their inherited empowerment aim, as was a condition of selection for the research. This selection criteria was discussed in (1.3) Researching Empowerment (Selecting a Sample: Identifying Projects, pp40-2).

complex and interacting issues of choice, control, participation and decision-making which seemed to be so absent from patients' lives:

"And that's what led into looking at empowerment. ... It was a progression and a shift. The more we delved into it, the more it was, 'OK, if you do get resources for people, they're probably so institutionalised that they wouldn't be able to use them.' It then moved on to saying, 'There's no point in working with the older people to get them resources, money in their pocket, to enable them to hopefully exercise choice etceteras, if they're blocked by the structures they're living in, the people who are basically in control of them'." (EP Interview).

Second, empowerment was adopted as an aim due to its current popularity and high profile as a buzzword. This provides one explanation for some projects' later adoption of the term, with the language of empowerment becoming commonplace some years after the creation of, for example, Second Chance Learning and the Lothian Coalition of Disabled People (both founded in the mid-1980s). The SAMH Advocacy and Empowerment Group, originally called Training for Trainers, adopted their empowerment aim to attract attention to the group and "get people to listen" (SAMH Interview), as much as to reflect the content of the training which addressed "the channels to empower yourself" (SAMH Interview).

Third, an aim of empowerment was adopted in response to individual participants' interest in or past experiences of empowerment approaches. Both Stirling Youth Action Project and Stirling Women and Health Project adopted this aim through their project co-ordinators after their initial creation. Both co-ordinators had previously worked within empowerment-based organisations and believed empowerment offered an effective, if "challenging", method (SYAP Interview).

Fourth, empowerment was felt to offer a "natural objective" (DCHP Interview) for practice, encapsulating projects' basic principles and philosophies, and giving direction:

"That [the empowerment objective] is the whole reason for being, that is the underpinning of the whole organisation. ... It is an issue in that we always have to make sure we're getting it right. ... We need to be talking about making sure that being user-led really means that, and we need to go back to the basic principles of that" (LCDP Interview).

Fifth, empowerment was believed to offer an alternative approach. For example Drumchapel Community Health Project claimed their empowerment objective "helps us to throw off any kind of traditional health education thing. We can categorically state we're not about being didactic and telling people what to do". Commentators from the SAMH Advocacy and Empowerment Group also felt their empowerment

aim differentiated their approach from other, more traditional and activity-based service provision for people with mental health problems:

"Simply the fact of calling themselves an advocacy project, that attracted me, that was all about self empowerment. People see that as the goal, and not going on bus trips, or just killing four hours away from the house. We did establish that" (SAMH Interview).

In particular here empowerment was believed to offer an alternative bottom-up, user-centred approach, whereby users could "speak for themselves" (LCDP Interview). In this way the health service founders of the Empowerment Project felt empowerment offered a method of obtaining the views of patients, relatives and staff which would complement their more top-down audit and survey methods (EP Document²).

In addition to such positive reasons, this research echoed the literature's degree of cynicism around adopting empowerment as an aim, with this tending to be directed towards perceptions of others' more covert aims. Identifying such hidden aims is clearly difficult, with Morley (1995) claiming empowerment is "a manipulative strategy", whereby "real aims" (p4) cannot be isolated from other goals. Similarly a number of writers claim empowerment has both liberatory and regulatory components (Baistow 1994; Gillman 1996; Humphries 1996), whereby "it is possible to view empowerment as a more subtle refinement of domination, cloaked in the respectability of liberatory discourse" (Gillman 1996 p113).

Such critics claimed the aim of empowerment was adopted to "cover up the fact that people are not empowering" (DCHP Interview), and to reflect a trend of "professionals dreaming up schemes" (SYAP Interview). In addition placing "the rhetoric" of empowerment into funding applications was felt to increase the chances of success (FCLD Fieldnotes), supporting Robson et al's (1997) identification of "perverse pressures" (p2) for organisations to commit themselves to user involvement. As one commentator noted, this may be a successful approach in the current climate, however new buzzwords and trends will attract funders' attention in the future, with empowerment work being marginalised:

"A lot of people are setting up advocacy projects without realising what the implications might be. Over the last four years, advocacy and empowerment have certainly been the funding words. It's no longer what funders would call innovative. You think, Christ, it's an essential! We need essentials, not innovation!" (SAMH Interview).

² Strathclyde Poverty Alliance (1992) Partnerships for Empowerment Project: Funding Application to Charity Projects.

Again supporting the literature, this research identified differing interpretations of empowerment aims between users, workers and managers. For example an empowerment approach was felt to attract peer recognition and admiration for workers and managers, with this group also appearing far more comfortable with empowerment language than project users.³ The Empowerment Project workers and supporters were particularly suspicious of the health service managers' motives, and vice versa. The former suspected that the latter were attracted by the "kudos" of a pilot project (EP Interview), aiming for "a glossy campaign" on a "flavour of the month" issue (EP Interview), rather than radically altering ward structures or relationships.

Contrasting Aims: People-Changing and Structure-Changing

"My own view ... is that change in society does begin with change within the individual, that they are inseparable, they are inter-twined. It isn't one before the other, or one instead of the other. It's a holistic thing. You don't change society if people in society don't want it to change, ... unless the people in that society actually feel a desire for change and want to change it in a particular way" (FCLD Interview).

Two broad and contrasting aims of empowerment can be identified: people-changing and structure-changing. For example there are debates as to whether community participation is "system maintaining" or "system transforming" (Jones 1992), and around how far community education aims to empower people "to deal with and to determine change" (McConnell 1996 pviii). Stewart and Taylor (1995) embrace both aims within their "structures of empowerment", which include community capacity-building and the release of skills and abilities (people-changing), as well as altering patterns and styles of local service delivery; strengthening the basis of decentralised decision-making; and "shifting underlying structures of society" (structure-changing) (pvii).

These aims reflect empowerment's personal and political strands, identified by Rappaport (1985) as psychological and political components, and by Rees (1991) as "important" personal and "critical" social goals (p69). As Shrage (1993) claims:

"Empowerment is a process that occurs both at a personal and at a political level. It is a process that involves changing power relations between individuals and groups and social institutions. At the same time, it is a process of personal change as individuals take action on their own

³ This issue is further explored in (3.2) The Language of Empowerment (Who Talks of Empowerment? pp132-4).

behalf and then redefine their understanding of the world in which they live" (piii).

Understanding these aims not only identifies participants' ultimate goals, but also assists in the interpretation of two other areas of practice. First, aims help identify the perceived roots of problems, for example whereby debates on the causes of poverty point to individuals (blame the person), institutions (blame the organisation), and structures (blame the system) (Dubey 1970). Second, aims suggest specific methods of practice, such as self-help or mutual aid within social agency or welfare models (people-changing), or institutional, social or political change within social action models (structure-changing) (Clark and Hopkins 1968; Morley 1995).

Empowerment as People-Changing

"The focus of empowerment practice is not on adaptation, but on increasing the capacity of individuals, groups and communities to ameliorate social problems" (Evans 1992 p141, after Gutierrez 1990).

People-changing means transforming individuals. Collins (1991 in Deveau 1994) challenges wholly structural definitions of empowerment by claiming that personal transformation is essential to empowerment, whether or not this has any wider impact. Similarly Kieffer (1984) claims that "the fundamental empowering transformation" is the individual shift from self-perception as "helpless victim" to "assertive and efficacious citizen" (p32).

The aim of people-changing was particularly identified within projects' promotion of self-help approaches, such as those identified within Stirling Women and Health Project and Drumchapel Community Health Projects' various self-help groups, within which individuals were encouraged to help themselves to change, rather than expecting to alter power relationships or structures.⁴ This aim was also identified in personal development approaches, identified for example in the work of the Foundation for Community Leadership Development.

Although focusing on individuals, consequent improvements in self-esteem and confidence were assumed to have knock-on effects on other project participants. For example when a student of Second Chance Learning had her small collection of poems published, the project held a book signing and launch. This was believed not

⁴ The role of the self help group is discussed in more detail in (3.1) Focusing Empowerment (Focusing on the Group, pp110-12).

only to have developed the student's self-esteem, but also the confidence of other project users, local residents and the whole project:

"That may not mean much in a big, big world, that one person produced a small book of poems. But for me and for the people in this area, that was a tremendous achievement" (SCL Interview).

The individualism of people-changing attracts some criticism, in particular the trends towards individualised and therapeutic service provision to meet individual consumers' needs, rather than challenging the structures which create such need (Calvert 1994; Heginbotham 1992; Miller and Bryant 1990; Russell-Erich and Rivera 1987). For example Humphries (1996) argues that the lack of structural analyses of 'race', gender and class issues means "the current culture of empowerment embodies containment and collusion, a depoliticising of action for change" (p14). A failure to examine structural power relations is felt to preclude the achievement of "genuine empowerment" (Heginbotham 1992 p11), which must be structurally "instituted" (Langton 1987 p228) or rooted "within the framework of alternative critical economic, social and political perspectives" (Mayo and Craig 1995 p10). Breton (1989) thus calls for a "perceptual shift" (p6), from rooting problems in individual behaviour towards the impact of socio-economic structures (also Baistow 1994).

Commentators echoed these concerns "about the kind of individualistic nature of it, that people are trying to change themselves rather than the things around them" (SCL Interview). The links with consumerism were also criticised, as, "Everything is changing. It's now personal enhancement, individuals, it's your credit card" (SCL Interview). This "it's up to you to change" perspective (SCL Interview) was felt to 'blame the victim', leaving individuals to fight their own powerlessness:

"It's dangerous, isn't it, because if you address the personal stuff, you end up making people responsible for their own plight, and that lets other people off the hook" (FCLD Interview).

The Foundation for Community Leadership Development, whose "training focuses on the development of those personal and interpersonal skills that underpin effective community action" (FCLD Document⁵), had themselves been criticised for too great a focus on individual and therapeutic elements in their training. As one commentator recalled, their critics claimed "we were just fostering upward mobility, you know - individual salvation at the cost of the collective" (FCLD Interview).

⁵ Foundation for Community Leadership Development (1995) Lothian Community Leadership Fund Certificate of Course Completion.

The aim of people-changing is additionally criticised as integrationist, through its emphasis on changing the person to better fit the status quo rather than transforming the status quo altogether. Morley (1995) claims this "normalising discourse" (p3) of empowerment is rooted in New Right aims to change socially marginalised individuals to fit in better with the mainstream, whilst Chaney (1997) also notes a trend towards "the incorporation of dissent into mainstream structures" (p8). As Stoecker (1997a) claims of the US Community Development Corporations (CDCs), "their goal is not to transform society" (p4) but rather to help poor communities change themselves and fit better into the consumer culture:

"At best, poor neighbourhoods are seen as weak markets requiring reinvestment rather than oppressed communities requiring mobilization" (p5).

However this research crucially found that people-changing was generally conceptualised in practice as multi-stage in itself, in particular as a first stage towards structure-changing. Thus people-changing and structure-changing tended to be seen as interdependent rather than mutually exclusive. For example the Foundation for Community Leadership Development argued that personal development and interpersonal skills were an essential precursor to effective community action and political change. Thus by developing "the tools to survive, ... maybe in three or four years time there'll be room for getting out there and campaigning and changing the world" (FCLD Interview):

"There is a lot of suspicion that what we are doing is not community development, whereas I'm absolutely clear it's one route. I'm not saying collective action isn't wonderful, but you can't have the one without the other really" (FCLD Interview).

Other commentators agreed that individualism can be a useful and undervalued concept in empowerment practice, supporting McConnell's (1996) assertion that participation results in more confident and informed individuals, and consequently "the route to equal opportunity and more participative forms of democracy begins to seem a bit more achievable" (p27). Thus only empowered individuals can make empowered communities:

"Essentially the present Tory government have hijacked individualism as a concept. [But] I don't think you can have a good, a well-functioning community, if there aren't a large number of individuals in it who are functioning well" (DCHP Interview).

This conceptualisation of changing people as a route to wider change was identified in four discrete approaches.

First, personal change is sought through "liberation education" (FCLD Interview), a key concept within Freirean discourse whereby "the dream of the educator is the permanent transformation of the world" (Freire 1990 in Evans 1992 p135). For example the SAMH Advocacy and Empowerment group trainees aimed "to change society, to go out and educate other people about what they can do" (SAMH Interview). Similarly, Second Chance Learning aimed for students to learn critical questioning, aware of claims that limiting learning to certificated courses has "narrowed the empowerment agenda" (McConnell 1996 p24). Although they offered certificated and vocational qualifications and found these popular, Second Chance also tried to promote a more radical learning approach:

"We've tried ... to do alternative things, like looking at the welfare rights situation and saying, 'Well, why is it that there's poverty? Why is it that there's unemployment? Does there have to be?'; rather than saying, 'Well, these are your rights - make sure you get them!'" (SCL Interview).

Freire (1972a; 1972b) terms this process conscientisation,⁶ or in Second Chance's words, "it's a total process of changing consciousness that we're talking about" (SCL Document⁷). Freire encourages "the pedagogy of the question" (Bruss and Macedo 1985) whereby individuals learn to think critically about their own circumstances, moving from a situation where "a lot of them blame themselves for their situation and cannot see the wider issues" towards "linking them in to wider social issues and working out ways in which they can confront that" (SYAP Interview). As one user claimed:

"It [the project] changed me to thinking about other folk apart from myself. It would be easy to stand about on street corners all the time. I used to stand about street corners. ... The project made you think, what's all this about?" (SYAP Interview).

Second, people-changing involves developing greater control over one's life and surroundings. For example Stirling Women and Health Project aimed for self-help groups and counselling to increase women's control over their own lives, so that they "are able to go and ask and find out, and disagree with what's there on their doorstep, and have that voice" (SW&H Interview). This seizing of control was also noted by Second Chance Learning commentators, who witnessed students' growing confidence to challenge others:

"People have been empowered to take on authority in different guises. They've challenged the Region, they'll take on issues where in the past they were just mucked around. ... They've gone on to take a high profile in other establishments. They challenge housing, or the doctor.

⁶ Conscientisation is discussed in detail in (5.2) Steps and Stages of Empowerment (Political Development: Conscientisation, pp233-5).

⁷ Hamilton, Edith and Paterson, Margaret (1993) Evaluation of Second Chance Learning.

Sometimes I've seen some of them just challenging their own basic lifestyle, the family lifestyle they have" (SCL Interview).

Third, projects aim for individual participants to become politicised. Such developments in political confidence were witnessed in the Lothian Coalition of Disabled People's office-bearers' elections in 1995, when the proposed candidates were opposed by other members for the first time. Coalition members also identified their own experiences of politicisation:

"I think it [the Coalition] has changed my life. ... Being involved with the disability movement has also benefited the other issues that I'm interested in, because I'm not just interested in disability issues. It's a big big world out there. I think it's important to look at the wider issues" (LCDP Interview).

Fourth and finally here, people-changing involves changing expectations. The Empowerment Project sought to tackle what they termed a "poverty of expectations" in long-stay hospital care, characterised by "an apparent acceptance by patients, relatives and staff that they [hospital conditions] represent the status quo to which the patient should adapt rather than the circumstances which should be altered for the benefit of the patient" (EP Document⁸). Second Chance Learning also aimed to change students' expectations of their own abilities and rights, by claiming "We are better than they said we were. ... When we're brought to realise this we will never settle for anything less" (SCL Document⁹):

Some of the groups at Second Chance now understand you can make changes. You don't make huge changes, and I think it's wrong to raise people's expectations to say you're going to change the world. But you can make changes, you can make changes in your own personal circumstances and you can make them in a smaller circle" (SCL Interview).

In summary, the aim of people-changing can be identified in empowerment approaches which promote self-help and personal development. Wholly person-centred aims can be criticised as individualist and integrationist, however there is wider acceptance of changing people as a route to wider change. This multi-stage approach can be identified in conscientisation, increased control over one's environment, politicisation and changing expectations.

⁸ Strathclyde Poverty Alliance (1992) Partnerships for Empowerment Project: Funding Application to Charity Projects.

⁹ Hamilton, Edith and Paterson, Margaret (1993) Evaluation of Second Chance Learning.

Empowerment as Structure-Changing

"Disabled people are getting organised in Lothian. We are part of a movement which is growing throughout the country. We aim to do nothing less than change the world and the way it responds to disabled people" (LCDP Document¹⁰).

Structure-changing means transforming social, cultural and organisational structures and relationships. Services and policies are thus adapted to suit users rather than changing users to fit into existing structures (Barnes and Walker 1996; Keenan and Pinkerton 1988; Stevenson and Parsloe 1993), or as rather as Bystydzienski (1992) claims "We do not want a piece of the pie, we want to change the recipe of the pie!" (p14 in Carabine 1996 p77). Clutterbuck (1995) stresses that empowerment is not possible "without changing systems and management behaviour" (in Newmark 1995 p4), whilst Chaney (1997) warns that without major structural and organisational change, those who are powerless will retain little trust in practitioners who speak a language of empowerment but operate in hierarchical, bureaucratic and unresponsive systems.

Structure-changing approaches are characterised by their commitment to the concept of transformation, identified within the literature as "transformative action" (Karl 1995) and "empowering transformation" (Kieffer 1984 p27; also Kernaghan 1992). Within the projects, aims to "influence policy and practice (SW&H Document¹¹) were also premised on the assumption that "Transformation is critical. Empowerment has to be primarily about changing the status quo" (SYAP Interview).

Whilst people-changing is criticised as individualist, conceptualising empowerment as structure-changing is criticised as an unrealistic aim for those with few resources and little power. Benington (1996) for example argues that many locally-based empowerment initiatives "appear very small-scale, and puny in comparison with the scale of the problem" (p1), although he adds that shifts in attitudes and cultures are possible. In response to this critique, Drumchapel Community Health Project recognised their limited power, noting that poor health is rooted in long-established problems and a complex combination of factors which one project alone cannot possibly eradicate (DCHP Document¹²).

¹⁰ Lothian Coalition of Disabled People (undated) Publicity leaflet.

¹¹ Stirling Women and Health Project (1991) Annual Report 1990-91.

¹² Kennedy, Aine (1994) Practising 'Health for All' in a Glasgow Housing Scheme: The Drumchapel Healthy Cities Project 1990-1992.

Structure-changing has both collective and political components.

Calls for collectivity are often rooted in critiques of individualism, as outlined earlier and summarised by Morley's (1995) questioning of whether empowerment-based initiatives "are so individuated that their aim is to muzzle the possibility for collective action for social change" (p6). Within the projects however, there was a strong commitment to collective organisation as a route to changing structures. Every single project promoted the group setting for meeting, learning, training, organising, or mutual aid.¹³ The Lothian Coalition of Disabled People provides a central example here, with their collective basis seen as essential for improved socio-economic rights:

"If they [members] have tried as individuals, they've often been battering their heads off what seems like a big brick wall. And I think what we are able to say as an organisation is, 'Well, you might not be the only person that's battering your head off that big brick wall, so why don't ... we all stop battering our heads off the big brick wall and work out how we can make a battering ram, and we'll knock it down together'" (LCDP Interview).

Empowerment as structure-changing also embodies a political and indeed radical interpretation, whereby people are seen as oppressed by socio-economic injustice rather than personal traits. For example Gibson (1991) calls for a revolutionary rather than reformist approach, whilst Evans (1992) claims that "... empowerment theory provides a model for critical reflection and action in the struggle for social transformation" (p140). Such political aims can be identified in the Community Development Projects (CDPs) of the 1960s and 70s, which linked local disadvantage to multiple and global structural and social problems, rather than individual pathology and local conditions. The CDPs called for nothing less than a redistribution of economic and political power, which ultimately assisted their own downfall at the hands of their central government funders (Smith et al 1977; Stewart and Taylor 1995).

This political interpretation was also identified within the projects, for example in Stirling Youth Action Project's recognition that "social policy, environmental and economic forces are all factors contributing to problems faced by young people and other user groups" (SYAP Document¹⁴), and that "private troubles reflect public issues" (SYAP Document¹⁵). Thus young people's behaviour was seen to reflect their socio-economic circumstances rather than any individual pathology, with "youthism"

¹³ The role played by the group in empowerment is further discussed in (3.1) Focusing Empowerment (Focusing on the Group, pp110-12).

¹⁴ Callaghan, Frances (1991) Stirling Youth Action Project: The Youth Action Approach.

¹⁵ Stirling Youth Action Project (1993) Annual Review '93 - a positive approach to young people.

blamed for reducing young people's rights (SYAP Document¹⁶). The SAMH Advocacy and Empowerment Group similarly aimed "to be a political group as well. We have to get some change, ... we won't just sit back" (SAMH Interview), whilst the Lothian Coalition of Disabled People claimed "first and foremost the Coalition is a campaigning organisation" (LCDP Interview):

"We could build people's confidence to bits, and it wouldn't change the fact that if you're using a wheelchair you can't get up a flight of steps. ... If you're in a context where you're set up to combat discrimination against disabled people, I don't see that it's possible to do it without doing some kind of campaigning" (LCDP Interview).

Politicisation was not always supported by project users. For example the Lothian Coalition of Disabled People found that some members sought "more of a social thing" (i.e. social groups and events), rather than a campaigning body (LCDP Interview). Their own youth survey found personal and apolitical interpretations of disability to be commonplace amongst young disabled people, concluding that the Coalition "give further consideration on how it might introduce young people to see disability as a political issue" (LCDP Document¹⁷). Commentators noted however that politicisation could grow from meeting others socially, as "for some people social contact comes first, and out of that comes the discussion and ultimately the politics - the light bulb comes on and it clicks" (LCDP Interview). Stirling Women and Health Project also found some local women to be resistant to their political interpretations of ill-health as rooted in poverty and deprivation, preferring a more individual and fatalistic interpretation. As one worker noted:

"Even when you're saying, 'It isn't just being ill that makes you unhealthy, it's your housing conditions and poverty, and being unemployed, and being in a bad relationship', they say, 'Aye, but that all just comes with it, doesn't it?'" (SW&H Interview).

These characteristics of collectivity and politicisation were particularly identified in two approaches to structure-changing: protest and cultural change.

Gelb and Sardell (1974) argue that protest can change power relationships and structures through disruption or the threat of disruption, although they concede that this approach has not succeeded in the poor accessing power at policy level. Here empowerment is conceptualised as "fighting back" against oppressors (Morris 1991 in Means et al 1993 p2), and tackling "the legacy of prejudice, discrimination, exclusion and disempowerment" (Barnes et al 1996 p9). The Lothian Coalition of Disabled People aimed to "Educate, Agitate, Organise!" (LCDP Interview) by protesting

¹⁶ Callaghan, Frances (1991) Stirling Youth Action Project: The Youth Action Approach.

¹⁷ Mohammadi, Jacqui (1993) Lothian Coalition of Disabled People Youth Strategy Project.

against a range of discriminatory policies and practices. Campaigns were staged for example against a local authority ban on all parking in Edinburgh's main shopping street; a local cinema's ban on guide dogs; and various legislative changes such as charging VAT on fuel and cutting social security payments. The Coalition also campaigned for a Bill of Rights for disabled people, supporting Morris' (1995) claim that "Empowerment can only happen within a rights-based approach" (p9), and recognising the interaction of civil rights with social and economic rights:

"You can have rights of access, say to a supermarket, but that doesn't put food in the supermarket trolley. ... Here 75% of disabled people live on disability benefits, three quarters of disabled people live in public sector housing. ... They are constrained by all kinds of constraints" (LCDP Interview).

The second approach of "a transformation of culture" (Kernaghan 1992 p206) was used by projects to challenge the cultures of the health service (the Empowerment Project), community health provision (Drumchapel Community Health Project), and mainstream educational opportunities (Second Chance Learning). Projects sought to create alternative models of practice, illustrate user demand for these, and thus "challenge and change public attitudes" (LCDP Document¹⁸). Such attitudinal change was attempted through training (for example through the Lothian Coalition of Disabled People's IDEAL disability equality training and SAMH's advocacy training), as well as campaigning, lobbying, and the promotion of positive images of discriminated groups.

There is however a notable tension within culture change. This centres on whose culture is to be transformed - those with more or less power? For example although "changing the culture" (SYAP Interview) was an aim of Stirling Youth Action Project, participants were uncertain as to whether this meant challenging the dominant adult culture or assisting the young people to strengthen their own youth culture. Whilst the project had "placed or retained the social action approach to youth work on the agendas of several other agencies" (SYAP Document¹⁹), other agencies remained keen to integrate local young people into existing provision, "trying ultimately to get them into a building to be sitting in a meeting" (SYAP Interview):

"Empowerment's not just about integrating young people into existing buildings or existing clubs, or existing structures. They are on the edge for a very particular reason. Bringing them in will mean challenges to the way things are done, challenges to the use of buildings locally, challenges to the way adults conduct their business. ... That has to be about transformation" (SYAP Interview).

¹⁸ Lothian Coalition of Disabled People(1987) The self-organisation of disabled people in Lothian.

¹⁹ Carstairs, Grant (1994) Stirling Youth Action Project Evaluation Report.

In summary, structure-changing is characterised by collectivity and politicisation, and can be identified in approaches such as protest and cultural change.

This discussion of two aims of empowerment, people-changing and structure-changing, has illustrated that these are contrasting but not mutually exclusive. Areas of overlap and interaction are now explored.

Agreeing a Vision: Tensions Between Aims of Empowerment

"There's a continuum of practices within empowerment and there are different aspects of it. Part of it for me is about personal raising of self esteem and one's sense of one's own worth and ability to contribute, as well as being able to work together collectively on problems and look at developing a social analysis. It can encompass both those things" (SYAP Interview).

Earlier the two aims of people-changing and structure-changing were linked to the personal and political strands of empowerment. This dualism is criticised by Labonte (1991) as "simplistic" (p19) for pushing provision into one approach or another. Likewise Baistow (1994) criticises the lack of analysis of the "paradox" between the personal and political (or "regulatory" and "liberatory"). Indeed some writers claim empowerment exists within this very interaction, rather than exclusively in one approach or another (Shragge 1993; Thursz et al 1995), as "what may appear personal has to be highly political" (Ward and Mullender 1991 p23).

Whilst Fried (1994) conceptualises organisations as *either* service-based (people-changing) or politicized (structure-changing), this research found most projects embraced *both* aims of empowerment, and could not be categorised as wholly one or the other. Although in most cases participants agreed that seeking dual aims was valid and indeed valuable, the tension between personal and political approaches to empowerment appeared insurmountable in certain projects. This consequently led to a lack of agreement over suitable methods, approaches and goals.

An Illustration: The Empowerment Project

The Empowerment Project provides one example of such tension. It was developed to improve communication and joint working between patients, relatives and ward staff, in particular focusing on improving patients' access to choice and decision-making. The project staff were keen to point out that they aimed for "the individual to have

influence over decision-making as regards their life as distinct from formal power sharing" (EP Document²⁰):

"I see it as quite an individual thing. We're not talking about them rising up and taking power over the hospital. It's not about that. It's about themselves being able to be listened to, and have a voice, and have some control over their daily life" (EP Interview).

Changing individuals' experience of long-term care could not be achieved without changing ward and hospital structures and relationships. Whilst health service managers envisaged the project "working with [nursing] staff ... to challenge in a soft sense existing practice" (EP Interview), the project staff and their supporters aimed to challenge inequality and powerlessness. The project saw changing nurses' attitudes as essential to tackle disempowering ward practices, yet the health service managers remained "defensive or dismissive" (EP Interview), and claimed this challenge to their culture was inappropriate. This confused project staffs' perceptions of their aims: "As George Orwell says in 1984, it's Doublespeak. ... We actually believed they were for a bottom-up approach, ... but any time we tried to challenge or raise a different method of working, they really came down on us like a ton of bricks" (EP Interview).

This conflictual and difficult history not only illustrates the contrast within empowerment's aims, but also their diverse interpretations. As other projects demonstrated, simultaneously seeking both aims is possible. For example the Lothian Coalition of Disabled People aimed both to develop members' confidence and skills (people-changing) and to change discriminatory policies and practice (structure-changing), without any sign of tension between these. Critically the Empowerment Project suffered from a lack of agreement around the meaning and desirability of its aims, leading participants persistently becoming bogged down in fighting out the interpretations and implications of every piece of work. In summary, there was no common realisation that different aims are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and thus the project lacked shared vision.

The Role of Shared Vision

"It is very difficult for meaningful change to take place unless there is a positive vision of the future. Thus the identification of ideas which present hope and expectations and widen horizons is essential" (Principal Community Education Officers' Group 1996 p303).

This research identified a critical role for shared vision within projects, whereby a set of (possibly contrasting) aims are agreed between participants to act as a wider

²⁰ The Empowerment Project (1993) Information sheet.

reference point for their activities. Knight (1994) argues that "vision is essential" (p19) as it creates a sense of common purpose and encourages commitment to projects' aims, even where the process to be followed is not agreed. Similarly Fried (1994) found that even where the "path" (or process) is in dispute, "clarity of goals" had a defining influence on organisational "coherence and unity" (p577). Clutterbuck (1995) found that successful empowerment-based organisations not only clearly defined the term, but also created and maintained consensus around the goals (or aims) of empowerment. He concludes, "The vast majority of empowerment schemes fail because they do not commit everyone to the same vision of what empowerment means" (in Newmark 1995 p4).

The commentators also recognised vision as a driving force, by uniting diverse views behind common aims. Quite simply, "If you've all got different visions, you've all got different agendas and go in different directions" (SW&H Fieldnotes²¹).

Within Stirling Youth Action Project, the lack of shared vision between the workers' aim of social action (structure-changing) and Crime Concern Scotland's aim of diverting young people from offending behaviour (people-changing), was identified as "an area of conflict right from the beginning" (SYAP Interview). Overall this research highlighted the importance of early discussion and debate to establish a shared vision of empowerment:

"There wasn't an understanding of what model of empowerment we were trying to work with. I can't stress that enough. There was no common ground ever established in the last 2 years as to what was empowerment. ... The different views of empowerment hadn't been thrashed out, the organisational differences, the cultural differences. ... There wasn't any thorough analysis of what is the model that this project's going to adopt? ... Two years down the line, it still hasn't been done" (EP Interview).

Conclusion

This chapter has explored empowerment's ultimate aims. This began by identifying the reasons for aiming for empowerment, and then identified two contrasting aims of people-changing and structure-changing. Although the former can be criticised as individualised and integrationist, projects tended to see increases in personal esteem, confidence and skills as a route to changing structures. Structure-changing itself was identified as having collective and political characteristics, within approaches such as protest and cultural change.

²¹ This was the warning of the facilitator at Stirling Women and Health Project's management training session.

The tension between these two broad aims was illustrated by the Empowerment Project's experience, where aims were differently interpreted and promoted by participants. This chapter ended by identifying a critical role for shared vision, which encourages commitment to broad aims without requiring any single conceptual model to be unanimously supported.

PART THREE

**METHODS
OF
EMPOWERMENT
PRACTICE**

3.0 INTRODUCTION

Part Three of this thesis explores three methods of empowerment practice.

Chapter 3.1 identifies seven different focuses for empowerment practice, exploring who is to be empowered. Each focus is discussed in turn, suggesting they are simply different, rather than individually superior or inferior. Areas of interaction are then identified within two critical tensions in focusing empowerment: between individualism and collectivism, and between consumerism and citizenship.

Chapter 3.2 explores language as a method of empowerment practice. The need to look at language as such a method is first identified, before the strengths and weaknesses of empowerment language are discussed. The varying usage of empowerment terminology between users and professionals is then identified, with this chapter ending by reviewing the relationship between language and ideology.

Chapter 3.3 examines different types of user involvement in empowerment practice. Typologies of involvement from the literature are first reviewed, before critically discussing seven different types of involvement identified within the projects. This chapter again emphasises the need for flexible approaches which promote a range of options for users, rather than ranking types of involvement into hierarchies.

3.1 FOCUSING EMPOWERMENT

Introduction

"Any serious thinking about empowerment must involve not just clarifying what is meant by the term but asking who is to be empowered" (Clarke and Stewart 1992b p7).

Although the projects shared the objective of empowerment, they focused their work differently in terms of who is being empowered. Seven focuses of empowerment practice can be identified: the individual, family, group, coalition, community, market, and wider society.

As this research progressed, the term 'focus' replaced two earlier phrases for this aspect of empowerment - 'level of intervention' and 'target of empowerment' - as several commentators expressed concern at the terminology. 'Intervention' was criticised for suggesting a uni-directional, professionalised model of empowerment, whilst 'targeting' was seen as synonymous with financial cutbacks and discrimination in social security. Labonte (1991) also claims "targeting" has violent and aggressive connotations, and "robs those with whom we think we should work of any intentionality, any subjective self-motivation or competency" (p7).

This chapter first discusses the principle of focusing empowerment practice, before each focus is explored in turn. Critical tensions between individuality and collectivity, and consumerism and citizenship are then reviewed.

Who is Being Empowered? Focusing Empowerment Practice

"A basic question to ask of any service ... is 'who is being empowered?'" (MIND 1990 p8).

Price (1990) criticises writers who fail to address who should be empowered, although in fact the literature seems frequently to discuss this in relation to empowerment's "targets", "levels", "settings", "structures" or "nodes". As illustrated in Table 3 below, there is considerable overlap between these models. This research more uniquely sought to "integrate individual, organizational and community levels of analysis" (Zimmerman et al 1992 p722), or rather explore their inter-relationship and inter-dependence. This follows Clarke and Stewart's (1992b) claim that focuses

are not mutually exclusive, as focusing empowerment in one way can disempower in another.

Table 3: Empowerment Theory and the Focus of Empowerment Practice

Author(s)	Terms Used to describe 'focus'	Focus of Empowerment Practice
Berger & Neuhaus (1977)	Mediating structures	Family, neighbourhood, church, voluntary organisation
Clarke & Stewart (1992b)	-	Customers, citizens, community
Fawcett et al (1994)	Factors	Person, group, environment
Hall (1992)	Identity theory concepts	Self, dyad, triad, family, religion, reference group, class, culture, and society
Labonte (1991)	Empowerment continuum nodes	Personal empowerment, small group development, community organization, coalition advocacy and political action
Labonte (1991)	Levels	Intrapersonal, interpersonal, within communities
McConnell (1996)	Levels	Personal, social, cultural, economic, political
Mondros & Wilson (1994)	Targets	Individuals, institutions, systems
Osborne (1994)	Social settings	Marketplace, community, public sector, political system
Simon (1990)	Levels	Individuals, groups, families, organisations and communities
Tout (1995)	Levels	Personal, group, community
Wolff (1987)	Targets of intervention	Individual primary group (family & neighbours), associational group (shared values/ activities), institutional or societal group (communities)
Zimmerman & Rappaport (1988)	Levels	Individuals, organisations, communities and social policies

Similar multi-focus models of empowerment were also developed and used within the projects. For example, Stirling Youth Action Project's youth action training identified "circles of influence" to differentiate issues which individuals, groups, and groups and allies could and could not influence (SYAP Document¹), and Second Chance Learning focused on both home and employment experiences of students, aiming "to provide continuous support and resources to enable participation in activities relevant to their needs, as a family and as potential wage earners" (SCL Document²).

Projects tended to see focuses as "completely interlinked" (FCLD Interview). For example the Foundation for Community Leadership Development promoted 'process-oriented psychology', which focuses on individual psychology, group dynamics, and

¹ Stirling Youth Action Project (1993) Evaluation Report: Youth Action Training Weekend 5-7 March 1993.

² Hamilton, Edith and Paterson, Margaret (1993) Evaluation of Second Chance Learning.

political and social forces, but most importantly requires the "flexibility to move between all these levels when it is called for" (trainer in FCLD Fieldnotes). Drumchapel Community Health Project organised their work around a "hierarchy of involvement", ranging from individual counselling to self help groups and community events (DCHP Document³). Stewart and Taylor (1995) suggest that such combined approaches to empowerment are the most effective, a view echoed by commentators, here in relation to management committees:

"Empowerment ... is operating on a number of different levels. You're empowering the management committee members to have more confidence, more sense of what they're there for, ... so you're empowering people on an individual level within a group. You're also empowering the staff by giving them that support, some feedback. ... But ultimately what you're doing is empowering the organisation. If that committee is functioning well, with individuals feeling confident, and you've got a staff team that are feeling more supported ... and have more of a concept of themselves as a team, then what should happen is that the project's functioning better. Then you're empowering more people out there in the community, ... because the project's doing its job" (FCLD Interview).

However such multi-focus strategies become problematic when participants disagree on a project's primary focus. For example the SAMH Advocacy and Empowerment Group experienced difficulties "where we all went in different directions, ... [and] different ways of thinking" (SAMH Interview), with some trainees keen to highlight issues of policy and practice (such as psychiatric medication), others preferring to do one-to-one advocacy work, and others pushing for group-based training. This lack of a clear focus led to frustration and a lack of direction, or as one trainee commented, "I would have preferred it if it had been said what would happen at the end, and it would happen" (SAMH Interview).

The focuses of empowerment are now discussed in turn.

Focusing on the Individual

"It's a project looking at the whole person and identifying the needs of women and communities, and trying to address those needs. ... And also empowering people to take control of their own lives" (SW&H Interview)

³ Kennedy, Aine (1994) Practising 'Health for All' in a Glasgow Housing Scheme: The Drumchapel Healthy Cities Project 1990-1992.

Servian (1996) is critical of the literature's emphasis on empowerment's social rather than individual or psychological meaning, as "what is missing is the view of the individual and an analysis of how an individual can be empowered or disempowered" (p1). However this research identified widespread agreement that empowerment must focus (at least in part) on individuals and their needs, "to invest much more in the people, number one" (FCLD Interview).

All projects focused on individuals by responding to personal requests for information, assistance or support. Both Drumchapel Community Health Project and Stirling Women and Health Project also offered one-to-one counselling or "individual support with a counselling approach" (SW&H Interview), with the former project also offering complementary therapies, such as aromatherapy and shiatsu, to individuals on a referral (including self-referral) basis. Projects also focused on individuals by encouraging personal development, for example identifying "key individuals" (DCHP Interview) to take responsibility for service delivery or management.

This willingness to "invest in individuals" (DCHP Interview) was often seen as a first step to group-based work, supporting Zimmerman's (1990b) claim that restricting empowerment to the individual level is "not necessarily contrary to the interests of collective action and social change" (p174). Drumchapel Community Health Project's one-to-one complementary therapies service stemmed from this belief that individual empowerment is an essential forerunner to collective empowerment (DCHP Document⁴). Second Chance Learning also saw their one-to-one tuition as a first step to group learning (SCL Fieldnotes):

"We're working very much with the individual, building up their confidence, often on a one-to-one basis. After coming here feeling a bit isolated and enjoying the one-to-one, people then fairly readily go into the groups, start talking to other folk, mixing with each other, start befriending" (SCL Interview).

The more exclusively individual focus of two projects met with more critical comment. In the first case this focus was chosen and in the second it was seemingly enforced. First, the Foundation for Community Leadership Development's focus on individual feelings and emotions as a route to personal effectiveness was criticised by some commentators for ignoring more concrete and immediate issues facing community organisations, such as jobs, management, planning, budgeting and finance. As one FCLD critic argued:

⁴ Kennedy, Aine (1994) Practising 'Health for All' in a Glasgow Housing Scheme: The Drumchapel Healthy Cities Project 1990-1992.

"FCLD ... think you can only address organisational effectiveness through personal growth and development. Well, I don't think you have to like people to work with them. I don't necessarily think you have to understand them all the time to work with them, and I certainly don't think you have to get intimately acquainted with their upbringing or psychoanalytic or psychotherapeutic stuff in order to be able to work effectively with them. ... I'm not sure that that's necessary" (FCLD Interview).

FCLD supporters claimed community workers and activists had to confront their personal problems to lessen the stresses which create ineffectiveness. Arguably however this individual focus cannot overcome stress-creating problems which may have broader economic or socio-political roots (Shragge 1993).

In the second case, some Empowerment Project commentators claimed their desired progression from individual on to collective work was blocked, and thus focusing on the individual became a necessity rather than a choice. Nursing staff appeared to have too little time to develop group activities with patients or relatives, or attend staff training sessions organised by the project, and although a relatives' group was created as a collective forum, this met just once a month and support petered out as the project continued. Consequently, rather than actively choosing individual work as their primary focus, project staff claimed they were "forced to take that line" (EP Interview), which made their partnership-based objectives near impossible to achieve, as different groups were not brought together in any constructive way.

Focusing on the Family

Within the literature, the family or home appears the least commonly identified focus of empowerment practice. Similarly in this research, projects tended not to work directly with families, although three methods of focusing on the family were identified.

First, users' family responsibilities and circumstances were indirectly acknowledged. For example, Second Chance Learning offered sessions on educational play for parents and children, and more formally taught certificated courses on child development and child care (SCL Document⁵). The students organised family days and events, aiming to promote family involvement in the project, with evaluations

⁵ McGlashan, Mary (1991) Learning in the Community: Second Chance The First Four Years 1987-1991.

finding that over half of their students were attracted to adult learning to help their children with school work (SCL Document⁶; SCL Fieldnotes). The most fundamental recognition of family responsibilities was the project's crèche provision, located on-site "to allow family participative learning" (SCL Document⁷) and, as this student stresses, critical for many project users:

"At that time [of joining the project] my daughter was only ten months old. ... The crèche enabled me to come to places and give me time to myself to do what I want, and to know that she was fine. ... You find the crèche is really a must for all the mothers that come here. I mean they have two or three children each, and they can't go onto courses without the crèche - there's not that freedom" (SCL Interview).

Second, projects recognised the pressures of family life and offered both informal and more structured support. Examples of the latter include Stirling Women and Health Project's 'Freedom from Depression' and 'Smarties' (single mothers and toddlers) groups, and Drumchapel Community Health Project's postnatal, breastfeeding, and cot death support groups. The Drumchapel project's asthma support group focused on parents of children with asthma, with the associated 'Dragon Club' being created for the children themselves and their siblings.

A third and somewhat different focus on family and home was offered by the Empowerment Project, who were unique in this research through their institutional setting. The project noticed that patients were treated as visitors rather than residents on the ward (although it offered long stay care), and consequently tried to encourage nursing staff to see the ward as the patients' home, rather than as hospital property. This raised issues of patients' rights to privacy, choice and opportunities for decision-making.

Focusing on the Group

"Anyone who has experienced joining a group for help and discovers that he or she helps others as well knows something of what it feels like to begin a journey toward what I call empowerment" (Rappaport 1985 p15).

Within the literature, the group is identified as a critical focus for empowerment practice. Kieffer (1984) suggests that whilst empowerment is sought by individuals, it can only be "nurtured by the effects of collective effort" (p28), whilst Riessman (1986) argues that "the group is key" (p60) in empowerment, claiming it is non-

⁶ Hamilton, Edith and Paterson, Margaret (1993) Evaluation of Second Chance Learning.

⁷ Hamilton, Edith and Paterson, Margaret (1993) Evaluation of Second Chance Learning.

competitive and anti-elitist, has indigenous and shared leadership, and emphasises control over one's life. This research identified similar views, with four aspects of groupwork identified as particularly critical.

First, within self-help groups in particular, elements of support, company, peer advice and sharing experiences and problems were valued as much as the completion of specific tasks or goals (Fieldnotes various):

"Folk have said here the successful thing is, as well as their own qualifications, is meeting other people who share the same experience. ... They're meant to know each other here [in the community], but a number of people feel isolated. ... One person in our class, having been here three months said, 'That's the first time I've told that to anybody else'. ... That's kind of empowerment as well" (SCL Interview).

Second, groups were seen as potentially more powerful than individuals through creating synergy, as "you gain a lot of strength from people together as a group, ... with a mix of people you can bring out the best in lots of people" (LCDP Interview). For example the SAMH Advocacy and Empowerment Group claimed to benefit from individuals playing varied roles, such as "enablers or advocates or counsellors", "leaders", or more generally being "proactive" or "reactive" (SAMH Interviews). In this case however, such synergy seemed no sooner created than the group's short lifespan ended (with the end of their funding):

"The sad thing will be that they think if they are a group and ... the opportunity is taken away to do something powerful. It's the power thing. Power is nothing very much if you are an individual" (SAMH Interview).

Third, groups tended to be relatively self-directed and self-managed, for example taking responsibility for their own activities, direction, fund-raising and social events (Fieldnotes, various). Participants in self-help groups argued they could help each other in a way that professional workers could not, as "we were all equal, we all lived in the same environment, we all knew about the problems, and you could open up, you could relate to one another" (DCHP Interview). Labonte (1991) claims that such groups "normalise people's experiences of powerlessness", as members relate to each others' circumstances. Similarly this research found that groups relied heavily on their own members:

"Each individual, each person, needs each others' support. Like if one's feeling bad one week and the rest of them are feeling pretty good, they help each other" (SW&H Interview).

Fourth and finally, group membership and participation were identified as "often crucial first steps in the process of individual empowerment" (DCHP Document⁸), reflecting Kernaghan's (1992) claim that "empowered workteams" in organisations are necessary to empower individuals, and Kahn and Bender's (1985) conceptualisation of self-help groups as a "mutually igniting endeavour" (p9) leading to both personal development and social change:

"Self-help groups afford the individual an identity, membership, purpose and direction - a beginning of banding together for political action and empowerment" (p9).

However, despite the popularity of the group focus, creating effective groups was evidently problematic. As one commentator noted, "We never functioned as a group. Well, as a group we did, but not as a team" (SAMH Interview). Groups were at times characterised by factionalism and cliques, or were "refusing to work with other groups" (SW&H Document⁹), suggesting that a collection of common interests in itself does not guarantee empowerment (Rees 1991). Within the literature, small groups are recognised as particularly problematic and "fraught with their own internal issues of power and cohesion" (Labonte 1991 p25). Labonte (1991) criticises small groups for ignoring the bigger picture by promoting self-help as a solution to structural or political inequities. In addition, the creation of effective groups is painstakingly slow, as groups only "slowly became close knit and mutually supportive" (SAMH Document¹⁰).

Such difficulties encouraged some projects to seek alternatives to groups as the seemingly 'natural' focus of empowerment, such as Stirling Women and Health Project, which sought a stronger focus on alternative approaches such as health events and one-to-one contact (SW&H Document¹¹). However, groups remain the key focus for much empowerment practice, with observations, interviews and documentary evidence all suggesting that participants want to know more about group effectiveness, direction and use. As one project evaluation concluded:

"Members felt that, in retrospect, it would have been helpful in this early stage to have a worker who had known more about how groups changed and developed and could have helped them understand the process involved" (SAMH Document¹²).

⁸ Kennedy, Aine (1994) Practising 'Health for All' in a Glasgow Housing Scheme: The Drumchapel Healthy Cities Project 1990-1992.

⁹ Stirling Women and Health Project Progress Report March 1993.

¹⁰ SAMH Advocacy Training Group (1994) Evaluation of the Group August '93 - February '94.

¹¹ Stirling Women and Health Project Progress Report December 1993/January 1994.

¹² SAMH Advocacy Training Group (1994) Evaluation of the Group August '93 - February '94.

Focusing on the Coalition

"It was [called] a coalition because we wanted to show that we were bringing people of all disabilities together, because so often in the past each group has stuck to their own particular group and we've been fragmented in that sense. If you get together there's a greater voice. We recognise there are some differences ... but we still think we have a lot to say together" (LCDP Interview).

The Foundation for Community Leadership Development claimed the coalition, or "multi-group" is "part of the empowerment equation" (FCLD Interview), with local alliance-building establishing "credible" and united community coalitions to counterbalance powerful state and private structures (FCLD Interview). Drumchapel Community Health Project actively supported several local health forums, bringing together local organisations, agencies and residents to address issues such as drugs and HIV, community health and women's health. Such coalitions were used to promote communication between professionals themselves, and between professionals and local residents, thus acting as "important vehicles for both community participation and professional accountability" (DCHP Document¹³).

However the Lothian Coalition of Disabled People provides the strongest coalition model here. As Heller (1989) claims "Ultimately, power is in the community of like-minded individuals who come together to form political coalitions" (p8), or as one Coalition member explained:

"The Coalition is a self-help group for people who live in this part of the world who feel disadvantaged by the way in which the society around them, the services that are organised in our society, and the people that live in our communities, fail to understand the needs of people that belong to this disadvantaged group" (LCDP Interview).

Despite such strengths, coalitions were not without their difficulties, principally participants' lack of experience in managing multi-group interests. Thus coalitions "fail not for a lack of urgency, ideals or commitments, but because many people do not have the bridge-building skills necessary to lead effectively in the face of persistent inter-group tensions" (FCLD Document¹⁴). For example the Drumchapel project experienced ongoing problems in maintaining their forums' momentum and support, with a balance of professionals and local representatives never being achieved.

¹³ Kennedy, Aine (1994) Practising 'Health for All' in a Glasgow Housing Scheme: The Drumchapel Healthy Cities Project 1990-1992.

¹⁴ Foundation for Community Leadership Development (1994) Course Brochure.

However overall coalition models were seen to offer a powerful model for empowerment through their solidarity around shared vision:

"Organisations like the Lothian Coalition of Disabled People will help put a stop to bad attitudes. In the old days, disabled people were divided up into spastics, the spinally injured and the deaf/ blind - always in categories. But when disabled people stand up together as in the Coalition and speak in unison, they're seen as much more powerful and consequently much more of a threat" (Kevin Mulhern, TV Producer, quoted in LCDP Document¹⁵).

Focusing on the Community

"Community, however else we understand it, bridges conceptually the small group and larger social structures, many of which are sources of oppression at the personal and small group levels, but which are too large for actions by individuals or small groups" (Labonte 1991 p32).

The concept of 'community empowerment' threads throughout the empowerment literature. Labonte (1991) places community at the centre of his empowerment continuum linking "the interpersonal with the institutional and political" (p32), whilst Wolff (1987) claims that empowerment focuses on communities, just as prevention focuses on individuals.

Community is as fraught a concept as empowerment, not least in terms of definition (McGregor et al 1992). In this research it equates to both geographical communities and communities of interest from which project participants emerged:¹⁶

"In some ways with our management committee we're representing the community, all our workers are representing the community, that's one aspect of it. The other aspect is the people that come to us from the community, ... and the way we interface" (SCL Interview).

Overall projects focused on communities in three ways. First, they carried out 'traditional' community development work, facilitating communities to identify and respond to their own needs through activities, services and events. The wide range of self-help groups, forums and other activities offered by projects was credited with "engaging the community" (DCHP Interview) to promote broad local involvement. For example Drumchapel Community Health Project identified local issues via community surveys and questionnaires, a market stall (which also offered health

¹⁵ Evening News 7.2.91 (Source: LCDP press cuttings file).

¹⁶ This is discussed in (2.2) Contextualising Empowerment (The Local Community Context, pp74-9).

advice), their drop-in facility, and community health volunteers' own 'grapevines' (DCHP Document¹⁷):

"[This is] a project that's tackling health issues in the community in an empowering way, ... tackling issues in the community that's relevant to the community rather than other people outside imposing what's to be done" (DCHP Interview).

Second, projects were involved in community capacity-building to create "healthy communities", where all views are listened to and decision-making is by consensus (FCLD Document¹⁸). This focus reflects Zimmerman's (1990b) view of empowered communities as participative, accepting and democratic:

"Empowered communities comprise empowered organizations, include opportunities for citizen participation in community decision-making, and allow for fair consideration of multiple perspectives during times of conflict" (p170).

For example, the Foundation for Community Leadership Development sought to increase the capacity of community leaders and activists, structures, and resources (FCLD Document¹⁹). They argued this encouraged local people to stay in and improve their local communities, rather than using training and personal development as a route out, whilst also investing in "those who are already active and have a track record of service and commitment to their community" (FCLD Document²⁰), rather than recruiting and training new personnel.

Third, projects attempted to develop a sense of community, a concept widely promoted within community psychology as "the glue that can hold together a community development effort" (Chavis and Wandersman 1990 p73). The Foundation for Community Leadership Development argued that individuals inherently seek such a sense of community:

"As human beings we have a deep-seated need for connectedness. Important as it is to cultivate our relationship with ourselves, our full humanity can only be realised through a deeper relationship one to another" (FCLD Document²¹).

The Empowerment Project aimed to develop this sense by building stronger links with the ward's geographically close, yet seemingly distant, local community. The project was keen to tap into the "amazing potential" (EP Interview) of community

¹⁷ Bonnar, Bill (1995) 'On the Line': Drumchapel Community Health Magazine (3) 2.

¹⁸ Foundation for Community Leadership Development (1992) Aims and Philosophical Framework.

¹⁹ Stares, Rodney and Demarco, Lawrence (1993) Strengthening the Voluntary Sector in South Tyneside, FCLD.

²⁰ Foundation for Community Leadership Development (1990) A New Approach to the Development of Grassroots Community Leadership.

²¹ Foundation for Community Leadership Development (1992) Aims and Philosophical Framework.

resources, especially as financial resources were so limited, and encouraged local schools, churches and community organisations to visit the ward and host events for patients and relatives. However the wider local community appeared less willing to accept its hospital neighbours. For example, a local club for older people was clear that it would not accept patients who had dementia, incontinence, or behavioural and emotional problems:

"It was quite interesting, the perception of people out there: we don't want people coming to our club and crying. ... If you want to let people back out into the community, that's quite interesting. They want people to come along and be happy and join in their sing songs, but not cry" (EP Interview).

This illustration suggests that focusing on communities can be a limited approach in empowerment work, as although this looks beyond individuals and groups to acknowledge the potentially oppressive impact of institutions, structures and social attitudes (Mitchell 1989), it fails to recognise communities' own potential to exercise oppression. In addition, whilst community-based work can provide uniquely localised solutions, it can overlook the wider social, economic and political bases of many problems (Labonte 1991). Focusing on the community may therefore simply blame communities for their own problems without managing to "overcome particularism and fragmentation, and address the wider economic issues" (Craig et al 1990 p286). Both Labonte (1991) and Craig et al (1990) recommend the creation of community coalitions to address this fragmentation, however the latter writers also question why local communities should organise at all to tackle externally rooted problems, and note a tendency "to be over-romantic about community action" (p288).

Focusing on the Market

A number of projects focused on empowering through markets, in relation to both employment and the wider economy.

First, in relation to employment, the projects tended to work in areas of high unemployment (such as Drumchapel and Greenock), or with groups which traditionally find securing employment difficult (such as people with disabilities, young people, and people with mental health problems). There was consequently some support for Berger's (1997) view that "'empowerment' means a job" (p8). Although none aimed for large-scale job creation, some projects did become key local employers. Drumchapel Community Health Project estimated that former volunteers filled ten jobs across the project and its spin-off initiatives, whilst the majority of the

Lothian Coalition of Disabled People's employees (and those of its sister organisations) were people with disabilities. Projects provided a job market for former users or volunteers as, for example, development workers (DCHP), administrative staff (SCI, SW&H), and community tutors and crèche workers (SCL):

"For me it's about ... empowering folk to take on employment as well. I mean a project like this should have a balance of local people and outsiders working in it" (SW&H Interview).

More broadly, projects developed the employability of users and volunteers by increasing their confidence, skills, experience and range of personal contacts. For example the Foundation for Community Leadership Development targeted personal development training at local activists to improve their chances of employment as community project leaders, rather than projects relying on in-commuting professionals. Second Chance Learning aimed to increase local skills and qualifications more formally, finding that the popularity of its certificated courses, such as community care and child care, reflected local perceptions of where job opportunities lay. Modular and certificated courses therefore replaced more informal education as the "cornerstone" of their work (SCL Interview). Such attempts to improve users' and volunteers' employability met with undoubted success in some projects (namely SYAP, DCHP, SW&H, and SCL), although as these key individuals moved on participants regretted the loss of experience and skills (Fieldnotes, various). Projects also tried to equalise training and employment markets, for example by targeting women returners (SCL) or women with disabilities (LCDP).

Projects also offered employee training to professionals and provided placements for trainee professionals, such as nurses and community education workers. The Lothian Coalition of Disabled People's IDEAL training group delivered disability equality training to businesses and agencies to confront workplace prejudice and encourage fair employment policies. The Empowerment Project organised staff training for nurses on the ward, covering issues of empowerment, dementia and disability. Several projects also provided placements for nursing, community education and other vocational students (including SYAP, LCDP and SCI).

Second, empowerment work focused on wider economic markets. All the projects recognised that most of their users were economically disadvantaged, and thus provision of and participation in project activities was generally free or heavily subsidised. Users' limited access to economic power was also acknowledged by services such as Drumchapel Community Health Project's Safe Kids Loan Scheme, which loaned home safety equipment (such as stair and fire guards) to families on low incomes. However it was not increasing economic power that attracted users to

projects. For example Second Chance Learning's sewing groups did not want to sell their products, claiming that was not the purpose of the group (SCL Fieldnotes).

Projects also helped to develop local economies by attracting funding into the voluntary and community sectors. For example Drumchapel Community Health Project estimated that they had secured around £400,000 of funding for spin-off initiatives (DCHP Interview). As one commentator argued, these sectors play a more critical role than the private sector in poor communities:

"In the local economy it's going to be the state in one form or another ... that'll generate any sort of economy, because the private sector never will. The idea that you can somehow create the conditions for the private sector to come in is a nonsense. ... It doesn't work. It never has and it never will work" (DCHP Interview).

Projects also aimed to publicise and challenge the inequalities of wider economies. For example the Lothian Coalition of Disabled People researched the economic costs of disability, including the national cost of excluding many disabled people from employment opportunities through poor physical access. Drumchapel Community Health Project's Food Action Drumchapel (FADs) group carried out research into local food provision, finding that (relative to the neighbouring wealthy suburb of Bearsden) local provision was more costly, limited and of low quality.

Finally here, projects aimed to create markets where none existed. The Empowerment Project argued that entry into institutional care brought patients rapidly-reduced opportunities to physically handle money and make spending decisions, which meant they quickly lost touch with the outside world. The project increased patients' access to their own money (which was formerly all kept centrally), and created ward-based spending opportunities by introducing a range of delivery and trolley services to the ward, selling newspapers, confectionery, soft drinks and toiletries. This interpretation of empowerment as consumer choice is promoted by Riessman (1986), who claims:

"This choosing dimension is the forerunner of the empowerment orientation. Empowerment is obviously more than choosing at the marketplace and more than the power of choice alone. But the underlying feeling and the skills associated ... serve to stimulate an increase in empowerment" (p56).

Focusing on Wider Society

"We're not a service delivery [organisation]. We're a campaigning organisation, ... we're issues-based" (DCHP Interview).

Empowerment practice which focuses on wider society reflects "a concern for the common good and a sense of connectedness to others" (Zimmerman and Rappaport 1988 p747), and a recognition that only wider change will have lasting effects (Friedmann 1992). Thus Stewart and Taylor (1995) claim that empowerment-based initiatives must address their "city-wide, national and global context" (p10), or as Coleman argues:

"The danger that this splendid vehicle for empowerment at local levels is capable of its own version of 'tactical provincialism' which fails to join the issues where people are hurting to a wider social analysis of national and international structures of injustice" (in MacLeod undated p7).

Projects sought such wider social change first by participating in programmes, networks and policy-making forums outwith their immediate locality. For example Drumchapel Community Health Project participated in the World Health Organisation (WHO) Healthy Cities initiative, becoming networked nationally and internationally.

Second, projects aimed to change wider practices and structures. In part this was linked to their pilot nature, which involves overtly demonstrating alternative or new techniques and approaches to other agencies and service providers. However projects also claimed to have increased expectations and elevated the voices of traditionally marginalised groups. For example Stirling Youth Action Project managed to open up local networks and forums to young people, who then became part of decision-making structures such as local area committees and the multi-agency Stirling Initiative:

"The whole thing about the letting of educational premises, about young people having somewhere to go, that's on the agenda now. That didn't come from some high falluting policy of the Council. It came out of young people actually being listened to. ... Change has started - it's young people that have affected that change" (SYAP Interview).

Participation in wider networks and forums was also used by Drumchapel Community Health Project to publicise their different way of working to other service providers:

"We are trying to affect the way that services are run, you know. Locally I suppose we're obviously trying to affect strategy and policy development within agencies. Maybe it sounds a bit grand for a wee community health project, but I think it's kind of working in a way ... We do want to affect wider society" (DCHP Interview).

Finally here, projects aimed to change disempowering attitudes and confront prejudice within wider society. For example the Lothian Coalition of Disabled People

campaigned for greater disability rights and sought to challenge the common charitable, pitiful images of disabled people as victims:

"The Coalition has a very large role to play in educating the non-disabled community, whether that be Jill or Joe public, or the media, local authorities, companies, whoever" (LCDP Interview).

In this way, projects fed into wider movements, such as the disability movement here.²² However projects' tendency to focus on smaller scales rather than wider society suggests some support for Morley's (1995) claim that "the transference of micro practices and achievements to macro social change remains problematic in the empowerment discourse" (p2). This tension between micro and macro is now explored in more detail.

Critical Tensions in Focusing Empowerment

This research sought not only to identify different focuses of empowerment, but also to explore their interaction. Two critical and inter-connected tensions are discussed here. First is the tension between individualist and collectivist approaches, a theme acknowledged in the earlier discussions of the Aims of Empowerment. Second is the tension between consumerist and citizenship approaches, referred to above in relation to markets, and in the earlier chapter on Roots of Empowerment (Political and Ideological Trends).

Individualism and Collectivism

"We cannot expect collective empowerment and participation in community health activities unless we first tackle empowerment at the individual level" (DCHP Document²³).

"I think in many ways, people have to at least notionally recognise a collective identity. Without a collective identity you can't start the empowerment process" (LCDP Interview).

As these two views highlight, there was no consensus amongst the projects as to whether empowerment is best sought through an individual or collective focus. The literature reflects this lack of agreement. Baistow (1994) highlights a trend in empowerment theory towards seeing personal power as "a necessary prerequisite" to collective power (p35). Indeed Chavis and Wandersman (1990) found that personal

²² This interaction between projects and wider movements was discussed in (2.2) Contextualising Empowerment (pp71-84).

²³ Drumchapel Community Health Project (1992) Press Release for the official launch of Drumming Up Health (the post-pilot stage of the project) 18/11/92.

power preceded group participation, yet a sense of group power showed no such tendency. Similarly Barr (1995a) claims that "those who wish collectively to empower must recognise the necessity of personal empowerment as its basis" (p126). Conversely Langton (1987) argues that effective empowerment requires to be "structurally instituted" (p228) rather than left to individual responsibility, whilst Berger and Neuhaus (1977) claim that only collective "mediating structures" can overcome the alienation experienced by disempowered individuals.

What this research highlights however is the interdependence, rather than independence, of individuality and collectivity, supporting Breton's (1989) argument that the assumption of "a *linear* progression from personal goals to social goals" needs to be replaced by a recognition that people are simultaneously "needy *and* oppressed" (p15). Thus empowerment can focus both on individual needs or agendas and collective views or circumstances, or as Freire "by transforming others, we often transform ourselves" (in Bruss and Macedo 1985 p10). Chavis and Wandersman (1990) add that individuals and groups act independently, but interact over time, whilst Stewart and Taylor (1995) suggest that collective action can be "a means to individual empowerment, and vice versa" (p14; also Evans 1992). As this commentator noted about her experience of participation in the Lothian Coalition of Disabled People, individual and collective elements are mutually reinforcing:

"I suppose it was the fact that the majority, 99% of the people, have disabilities, and you could talk about issues without fear of people being patronising, or denying what you felt was natural. You were being given the opportunity to talk about all kinds of concerns that you had and how they'd affected you. It made people realise that a lot of the things that had gone on had been as a result of prejudices and the oppression that you had experienced" (LCDP Interview).

However as earlier evidence illustrated, difficulties arise when practice is restricted to either individual or collective approaches, with no recognition that these can be overlapping, rather than mutually exclusive.

Consumerism and Citizenship

A second critical tension can be identified between consumerist and citizenship focuses of empowerment. As noted earlier in the Roots of Empowerment, the conceptualisation of empowerment as consumerism has become increasingly prominent in recent years, with the notion of individuals as choosing customers gaining acceptance across the political spectrum. Service users are now viewed as customers or consumers (rather than citizens) in "nearly all types of service regardless of the nature of the service, the sector in which it is provided, and whether or not the

customer is also the provider" (Robson et al 1997 p1). The concept of citizenship also enjoys an increasingly high profile in the empowerment literature, as those who are disempowered lack resources and rights (Friedmann 1992), with user involvement and self-advocacy approaches seeking to promote rights in the face of consumerist forces (Baxter 1996). However Berry (1998a) claims consumerist interpretations have "least clarification of terms and most misleading rhetoric" (p269), whilst Stewart and Taylor (1995) complains that "the concept of citizenship has been blunted and diluted" (p8).

Whether project users are perceived as citizens or consumers has important implications for empowerment practice (Clarke and Stewart 1992b; Croft and Beresford 1990), resulting alternatively in democratic or market approaches (Taylor et al 1992). Empowering consumers means focusing on the views and experiences of individual service users, and highlighting issues of access and choice (Baxter 1996). Empowering citizens involves recognising individuals' participation in a wider community which addresses civil, economic and social rights.

Whilst individualism and collectivism are interdependent, consumerist and citizenship approaches are "potentially conflicting" (Baxter 1996 p5). Conceptualisations of empowerment as consumerism are criticised as individualistic (Stewart and Taylor 1995); limiting political identity by restricting choice to predetermined objects (Rees 1991); overlooking inequalities in power and control in 'free' markets (McConnell and Taylor 1988); and ignoring the inability of the poor to act as paying customers in welfare (Berry 1988a). Some commentators were critical of what they saw as the privatisation or commercialisation of empowerment evident in such consumerism:

"I think the whole issue of empowerment must have changed. ... As we saw empowerment in the heady 60s days, you know strikes and red France coming to a halt, and possibly the whole capitalist system. When you look at it now, it's such a change. Empowerment - what does it mean now? ... Funnily enough we didn't talk about empowerment at that time really. We talked more about working with people, community action, community development - all the community words. ... Everything is changing. ... It's personal enhancement, individuals, it's your credit card." (SCL Interview).

Citizenship-based approaches are alternatively championed for replacing differential purchasing power with individual and collective action through self-help and mutual aid (Osborne 1994); for involving users "as a matter of right rather than discretion" (Barnes and Walker 1996 p379); and for addressing issues of accountability, power redistribution, injustice and oppression (Berry 1988a). Consequently for Barnes and Walker (1996), who compare "rather shallow" consumerism with "genuine

empowerment" (p375), the contrast is less between consumerism and citizenship than "consumerism versus empowerment" (p378).

Within the Empowerment Project this critical tension in focusing empowerment became clear. Whilst the health service partners were keen to develop consumer opportunities for patients, for example introducing new products to buy on the ward, such as newspapers, confectionary, toiletries and so on, they were resistant to developing stronger rights for patients and relatives. Other partners argued that consumerism was an inappropriate model to use with frail and poor older people, who had no choice but to live in long-term care and too little information to make informed choices. This lack of alternatives made patients relatively uncritical of hospital services, suggesting management-led evaluations such as patient satisfaction surveys were relatively meaningless (EP Fieldnotes). As Barnes and Walker (1996) comment, in such circumstances "a requirement to exercise choice ... might be experienced as positively disempowering" (p379). Significant conflict emerged between the Empowerment Project partners around this tension:

"If you look at the managers of the NHS, the whole thing about customer-led services, if you read any of the stuff on consumer empowerment, the whole thing's totally different from what we would call democratic empowerment. ... The empowerment model that they use is a million miles away from the model that we were trying to apply" (EP Interview).

Conclusion

"Who becomes empowered and what they do with those powers is more critical than an abstract notion of empowerment regarded as a 'good thing' in itself" (Deem in Morley 1995 p1).

The focus of empowerment, or who is to be empowered, plays a critical role in practice, and is the first of three methods explored here. In this chapter seven focuses have been explored: the individual, family, group, coalition, community, market and wider society. Projects appeared to concentrate their efforts on individuals and groups, possibly explained by Knight's (1994) advice that "it is important to focus on areas where a difference can be made. ... The goal must be to concentrate on winnable matters" (p20). For small-scale, local or time-limited projects, there may have been little incentive or opportunity to influence broader agendas, although there was for some a willingness to do so.

Importantly however this exploration demonstrated that every focus of empowerment had unique strengths and weaknesses, with multi-focus strategies perceived as most

effective. Whilst projects balanced the tension between individual and collective approaches to empowerment, that between consumerist and citizenship approaches remained less resolved.

Part Three now moves on to examine a second method of empowerment practice: language.

3.2 THE LANGUAGE OF EMPOWERMENT

Introduction

Within social policy, language is commonly explored in relation to practice, with terms such as 'community' (Chavis and Newbrough 1986; Labonte 1991), 'citizenship' (Andrews 1991), 'participation' (Arnstein 1969; Hallett 1987), and more recently 'empowerment' the focus of much detailed analysis and debate.

This chapter discusses empowerment language as a method of practice in itself, beginning by asking why language is worth exploring in this way. The strengths and weaknesses of the language are then highlighted, before examining who uses the term 'empowerment'. Finally language and ideology are discussed by examining the gap between rhetoric and reality.

Why Look at Language?

"The language of empowerment is easy enough to speak" (Mitchell 1989 p14).

Mitchell suggests that using empowerment language is simpler than practising empowerment. This is strongly supported by writers, practitioners and service users, who claim that empowerment rhetoric and reality are miles apart. Baistow (1994) suggests that empowerment language is used with "fluency and familiarity" (p34), yet remains "largely linguistic and rhetorical" (pp34-5) with the taken-for-granted meanings left unexplored. Ward and Mullender (1991) argue that the language of empowerment is in itself an inadequate foundation for practice, whilst Chaney (1997) notes that written references to empowerment are far more in evidence than empowering organisational structures and practices, since theorists write about broad ideals whilst practitioners operate within the constraints of 'real' communities. Thus "the literature illuminates the gap between rhetoric and reality, and does not reflect the preoccupations of practitioners nor describe their work" (p8).

Such views suggest that an exploration of empowerment language may be less than enlightening in unpacking the concept. However this research chose to examine language as a method of practice for three critical reasons.

First, considerable investment appears to be placed in empowerment language. The literature contains cynicism, but it also demonstrates as much of a preoccupation with the language of empowerment as wider practice (Osborne 1994). This interest in semantics reflects both empowerment's popularity as a word, and writers' own determination to make sense of the complex and disputed term. There was also considerable interest in the language of empowerment amongst the commentators, who both championed and criticised the term, and rarely claimed "ambivalence".¹

Second, exploring the language of empowerment separates the term from others which are used almost interchangeably. For example Alamgir (1989) defines participation as the "other name of empowerment of people" (p8), whilst McGregor et al (1992) similarly refer to "real participation" - sometimes called 'empowerment' (p5). Donelan (1995) suggests there is a "lexicon of empowerment" (p38) containing associated terms, such as participation, democratisation and enabling. However Mitchell (1989) claims, greater discretion between these terms is critical:

"There's nothing wrong with enabling, but it's not the same thing as empowering. ... Empowerment properly understood ought to be a shock to the system, and not just 'enabling' by another name" (p14).

Third, the projects all demonstrated an interest in critically exploring language more generally. For example the terms 'user' and 'advocacy' (SAMH); the key aims of 'collaboration, empowerment and participation' (DCHP); the difference between 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches (EP); the terms 'people with disabilities' and 'disabled people' (LCDP); the names of training courses (FCLD); the job title 'community tutor' (SCL); the difference between 'health' and 'wellbeing' (SW&H); and the meaning of a 'youth action approach' (SYAP) were all identified by commentators and documentary sources as topics of debate within empowerment practice.

Notably however, whilst language was explored in this way, there were signs of a backlash against a "politically correct" obsession with terminology (DCHP Interview). For example Stirling Women and Health Project warned against becoming too "hung up" on how to refer to project users, as being too inhibited or trying to be too correct could cause other problems (SW&H Document²). Some commentators within the Lothian Coalition of Disabled People also expressed a desire not to get too "hung up" (LCDP Interview) on language at the expense of challenging attitudes and behaviour. Overall, language was seen as an important area of practice in itself:

¹ Only one commentator reported feeling ambivalent towards empowerment (SYAP Interview).

² Stirling Women and Health Project (1993) Report on the Ideas Day 26.6.93.

"We look at things like language because language ... is important. We don't get hung up on political correctness, because people think 'Oh that's just being p.c.'. ... [But] Language is important, because it can be very very negative, ... reinforcing stereotypes and prejudices" (LCDP Interview).

The Power of 'Empowerment'

"It's a good word and that's why it's survived in spite of the revulsion of 'Americanisms'. ... Empowerment is a very convenient word" (FCLD Interview).

This research identified four reasons why empowerment language is seen as important. First, whilst acknowledging areas of debate and difficulty, a number of commentators claimed they used empowerment language quite simply "because that is what I do" (LCDP Interview). 'Empowerment' summarises practice like no other word, acting as a powerful tool to promote projects' objectives:

"I don't shy away from using the word empowerment, because hopefully that's what I do. ... There's a fine balance between being an enabler and an interventionist. ... By enabler read empowerer because that's the way I actually prefer to work" (LCDP Interview).

A second advantage of empowerment language is its 'catch-all' quality. Whilst critics argue its diverse meanings cause confusion, supporters claim this very lack of specificity gives added value. For example the SAMH Advocacy and Empowerment Group adopted the language of empowerment because it was "a more vague concept, ... a more general thing that can apply to any number of issues" (SAMH Interview). The more "specific" definitions of advocacy were conversely perceived as confusing and limiting:

"We tried the advocacy side of things and people were getting totally bamboozled. Some bits were contradicting the other. That's how it ended up empowerment - just cutting across and not getting yourself into trouble. ... [With empowerment] it's that open what you can mean. I don't think there really is a final definition of empowerment - everybody has their own definition" (SAMH Interview).

Ryle (1949 in Price 1990) develops this point about the freedom afforded by vagueness when he categorises the verb 'to empower' as "an achievement verb", whereby preconditions, processes or mechanisms are not prescribed. Similarly Rappaport (1987) argues that empowerment's inclusion of "the entire class of phenomena" means it "is a term that captures, better than any of the currently available competing alternatives, the overarching *goals* of our community of scientists" (p129 emphasis added). Osborne (1994) suggests that politically this

diversity of meaning is helpful, allowing politicians "to present alternative versions to different audiences" (p56). Overall empowerment is perceived as having broad problem-solving qualities, as "a pill for all seasons" (Rees 1991 p4) or as "the magic solution" (Kirkpatrick 1992 p29).

Third, empowerment inspires and motivates practice. Chaney (1997) suggests that amongst practitioners the term's idealism "functions as a sort of necessary delusion, a psychological prophylactic against feelings of powerlessness and depression" (p8). Some commentators agreed that the term empowerment motivates practice, for example where having empowerment as a stated aim allows workers to keep pushing for that goal, despite other pressures or disputes. For example the Empowerment Project (originally named Partnerships for Empowerment) staff were ultimately grateful for their project title, despite initial misgivings about its complexity, as stating their empowerment objective in their name provided clear direction:

"He [founder] made the point at the time that if it's not in your title and if it isn't upfront then ... somewhere down the line it'll all disappear. ... It's very important that it is there, as it's always in focus then, you know what you're talking about. ... It's called the Empowerment Project so therefore it is, people have to think, 'What is empowerment?' And we did" (EP Interview).

Fourth and finally, commentators argued that empowerment had to be claimed back from those who have hijacked the term. Claiming empowerment allows for redefinition and redirection, just as words such as 'gay' and 'black' have been reclaimed as symbols of pride from those who used them as terms of abuse or mockery. This is essential to protect and promote one's values:

"I know people that say, 'Oh, that's silly!' OK, but if things are being used to beat you with, then it stops being silly. People who describe themselves as black don't think that taking back their language is silly! ... We are reclaiming the language" (LCDP Interview).

Claiming empowerment was believed to reinvest with a clearly defined meaning and a certain message terms which have seemingly become empty rhetoric. This rationale explained the title of the Foundation for Community Leadership Development:

"Even though many of the words we were using, like community, are sort of almost threadbare of meaning through different usage, [we thought] let's use them in this context of leadership and development, and try and put some meaning back into them by the practice that we're undertaking" (FCLD Interview).

Therefore many participants claimed the term empowerment acts as a critical method of practice, in that it summarises what projects do, embraces diverse approaches, inspires and motivates participants, and reinvests terms with meaning.

"Tainted with Jargon!"

"Liberty! Equality! Fraternity! Emancipation! Enlightenment! Empowerment! We live in a world where emotive words are used to stimulate us to great deeds and urgent action. However, often the essential meanings of watchwords and slogans are little more clear than the symbolic significance of the colors in some national flags" (Tont 1995 p3).

Despite such positive elements, empowerment language is not unanimously seen as a powerful method, with four main criticisms being identified.

First, as noted in the title of this section, one commentator complained that "We were tainted with jargon!" (DCHP Interview) in adopting empowerment language. Empowerment's current popularity as a buzzword is believed to devalue what could be a useful term:

"It's a word that gets bandied about, and I have to say it's a word that I maybe use now and again, but I prefer not to, because I just feel it's an overused word by an awful lot of people" (LCDP Interview).

The literature echoes these concerns. For example Kearney and Keenan (1988) describe empowerment as a new "catchphrase" or "jargon word" (p3), and Heginbotham claims empowerment is consequently "a frustrating term" (p12). There is widespread agreement that the "sloganising" of empowerment (Rowlands 1995 p106) and its use as a "banner" (Baistow 1994 p40) have led to its misuse (Beresford and Croft 1993). Overuse has therefore devalued the concept (Mondros and Wilson 1994):

"This marvellous buzzword empowerment - stick your fingers in the socket and get empowered! ... It's a conundrum as a word. I'm not really sure of its utility actually. It's a glib kind of politicians' word that can be used to describe a kind of fairly fuzzy idea about self-actualisation, I suppose, if you're going to use jargonistic language" (FCLD Interview).

Kirkpatrick (1992) identifies empowerment as only the latest "in vogue" term in a long list of buzzwords (p29), such as 'citizenship' (Andrews 1991; Gaster 1996); 'community' (Hayton 1995, Ward and Mullender 1991; H Young 1996); 'communitarianism' (Gray 1995); 'participation' (Arnstein 1969, Hallett 1987); 'partnership' (Bates 1994); 'social justice' (Rees 1991) and 'stakeholding' (S Young 1996). Although empowerment has out-lived and out-popularised many such buzzwords, its vague and disputed meaning suggests much common ground. Note however that empowerment is not always classed as jargon, as illustrated in the

Scottish Association of Mental Health's (undated) user guide to advocacy and empowerment, which recommends:

"How do you empower service users? ... Using plain English, not jargon" (p18).

Second, within the literature there is almost universal recognition that this "fuzzy and familiar" term (Economist 1990 p21) has too many meanings (see for example Barr 1995b; Baistow 1994; Berry 1988a; Beresford and Croft 1993; Clarke and Stewart 1992a; Croft and Beresford 1990; The Economist 1990; Gibson 1991; Hoyes et al 1993; Means and Smith 1994; Mondros and Wilson 1994; Rappaport 1985; Simon 1990; Taylor et al 1992). Simon (1990) notes that "Empowerment ... is a term that confuses even as it inspires" (p27), having "multiple contemporary meanings" (pp27-8) which result in ambiguity and contradiction (Craig and Mayo 1995). Amongst the commentators, this view that "empowerment means all kinds of things" (SCL Interview) was also prominent:

"I think the difficulty with a word like empowerment ... but also other words like it, is that ... it doesn't have a single meaning. It means many different things to many people. ... Some people understand by it it's more community development. Some people think it's the overthrow of the local authority. Some people don't like it at all as a word, ... people just switch right off" (DCHP Interview).

Related to this criticism is a third difficulty, that empowerment is too rarely and too vaguely defined. It is consequently a word avoided by some, as even where individuals are confident of their own interpretations, shared understanding is not guaranteed:

"I know that it [empowerment] is in vogue, but I kind of try and avoid loaded terms because I'm never sure that I understand what everybody else is meaning by them" (FCLD Interview).

There is particular criticism of those who assume empowerment's meaning is clear and fail to define it (Servian 1996), with frustration and even incredulity noted at the term's continuing popularity (although as noted earlier its vagueness was an attraction to some). This failure to clearly define empowerment caused particular problems for the Empowerment Project, with persistent disagreements about what the practical work of the project should involve. In this case, the adoption of empowerment language offered "enticing promise" (Kieffer 1984 p10) yet little clarity of goal. As one commentator concluded, "we could have avoided the worst problems if we'd maybe thought earlier to establish what empowerment was" (EP Interview). Definitions were only sporadically attempted and never agreed by all participants, confusing the task at hand:

"If you don't start with trying to work on that basic understanding from the word go, then you're going to come to great difficulties. ... What we

found difficult was the lack of willingness to engage in discussing what empowerment means. ... It was let slip. ... It's very difficult to discuss what do we mean by empowerment when nobody's very clear, but the fact that nobody would stop at any point and actually explore it" (EP Interview).

Fourth and finally are complaints that empowerment language is used uncritically, which masks its impact. As Gomm (1993) explains, it "designates many excellent practices and some dubious ones, but exactly what they are and who is doing what to whom, is hidden by its usage" (p137 in Pugh and Richards 1996 p40). Commentators criticised those using empowerment language for being "idealistic" (EP Interview), avoiding difficult issues such as resourcing or management, and ignoring the complexities and limitations of practice. In short, whilst "the terminology slips off the tongue" (SYAP Interview) or "comes off the lips" (SCL Interview), simply talking about empowerment does not make it happen:

"I prefer to go and do stuff rather than talk about the theoretical reasons behind it. I sometimes think you can get bogged down in talking so much about it, that you never actually go and do anything" (SW&H Interview).

This "uncritical use" of empowerment language masks both the confusion within the term (Rowlands 1995 p101), and professionals' potentially dominant and controlling roles in empowerment practice (Grace 1991). Empowerment, like community, is a "teddy bear" word, full of "cuddliness" (Hayton 1995 p2), or as one commentator argued:

"I'm critical of the word empowerment and the way in which it's used very slackly and laxly. ... It's like slapping community on everything - community policing, community charge - what the hell's that got to do with community? It sounds nice, it's soft, it's cuddly, it's approachable, ... and a bit woolly. ... The same is true of empowerment. Empowerment's got this kind of hard edge to it but it's there to make things better, to challenge and change things. Well no, I don't think so really" (FCLD Interview).

Such concerns support Colenutt and Cutten's (1994) warning against seeing empowerment as "a magical answer" or "an instant solution" (p249). More vividly, Ward and Mullender (1991) characterise empowerment language as a "social aerosol" which can be 'sprayed over' practice to disguise conflict and difficulty:

"Because it [empowerment] creates a vague image and an aura of moral superiority, it affords protection against criticism ... It acts as a 'social aerosol', covering up the disturbing smell of conflict and conceptual division" (p21).

Who Talks of Empowerment?

Empowerment is thus recognised as a potentially powerful yet confusing term. These two attributes are however not mutually exclusive, with commentators demonstrating a flexible approach to language across different audiences, corresponding to Fried's (1994) findings that different organisational subcultures are distinguished by their choice and usage of empowerment.

First, project workers claimed to avoid using the term empowerment with service users, preferring less mystifying or complex term. Consequently, "in a lot of our publicity we wouldn't use empowerment" (DCHP Interview) as it would discourage, or even threaten, potential users. Avoiding empowerment as a term also lessened workers' own confusion:

"I work with women mainly that are local, and if you're saying to them, 'I'm going to empower you!', they'll say, 'Is she going to zap me or something?!' Instead of using the word, I just say what it is we're aiming to do. That seems to be better for me and they understand it better" (SW&H Interview).

This perception of empowerment as a workers', politicians' or funders' word, and as too formal and mystifying for users, is particularly interesting considering its high profile in organisations and movements seeking local inclusion and participation. Empowerment language seemingly carries an official, elitist or conformist element which projects sought to avoid, as "There's no point in repeating a formal language that people are not in tune with" (SCL Interview). For example Second Chance Learning aimed to build students' confidence in their own local dialect, rather than importing new, formal language, with the employment of local residents as tutors seen as critical in creating a non-threatening and accessible environment with shared local language. Promoting empowerment for Second Chance meant avoiding empowerment language with users, echoing Freire's argument that "the language of the working class ... is much more concrete. It is as concrete as the way they live" (in Bruss and Macedo 1985 p20):

"One of the biggest things ... is that people speak the same language. ... They're talking the same language, they're using the same words, they've got the same sense of humour. ... All the time there's a consciousness that they're not speaking 'properly', it's the Greenock accent, and it's inferior to anything else. So I think if anything it rates a project that says 'Greenock's fine! How you say things is brilliant and you're funny and you're great!'" (SCL Interview).

Second, from the perspective of project users, there is less conviction that empowerment language is inappropriate or unhelpful. Indeed some user movements have themselves chosen empowerment as a term which represents their aims and

values (SAMH undated). In this research, Drumchapel Community Health Project provided an interesting example of users' perceptions of the term. When the project designed a tree symbolising their aims and functions,³ their three core principles of empowerment, collaboration and participation were incorporated on the trunk only after much debate about the terminology. As one worker recalled:

"It was the volunteers who said, 'Just use these words - don't patronise us! We understand the words!' ... In this case the words were useful. ... They said what we wanted to say, ... [and] they were well known phrases within the project as well" (DCHP Interview).

Critically here, empowerment language was familiar to all participants and represented what they wanted to do. In addition, the community health volunteers believed adopting such terms would help them gain credibility with local professionals and politicians, and 'play them at their own game'. However, reflecting Second Chance Learning's experience, the Drumchapel volunteers eventually found their own informal, local language to be more effective and powerful:

"We wanted to use their language and their talk against them, which we did in a way. But it didn't really work - we were just becoming them. ... What we found started to work was we just used our ain sort of speak, the way we would put it across, to force them to come round to our way of speaking, and it worked and it still works" (DCHP Interview).

This experience illustrates empowerment's contrasting aims as discussed in Part Two, as the volunteers first tried *changing* to fit the system (people-changing), but then more successfully made the system respond to them (structure-changing). However this example also illustrates that service users and volunteers do have to confront professional or political terminology outwith projects. For this reason, Stirling Women and Health Project incorporated empowerment into its 1995 mission statement, to encourage project users to explore and understand a term used by powerholders:

"I think it [empowerment] needs to be described in everyday language that people understand. It's a word I feel comfortable with. ... I felt it was important that the management committee ... understood the language. I think very often when it's coming from on high it's in terminology that folk don't understand" (SW&H Interview).

This echoes earlier comments about reclaiming language, and supports Rees' (1991) argument that individuals cannot start a process of empowerment until they are "armed with the language" (p48). This involves a shift from accepting what words "denote" to constructing what they "connote" (p48), thus abandoning the "language of submissiveness" and learning a new "language of certainty", like the powerful (p45).

³ This image is discussed in the (2.1) Roots of Empowerment (Introduction, p56).

A number of commentators claimed that the language of empowerment was used "only because it's the 'in' kind of thing" (SW&H Interview), and "it seems if you use it in a conversation or you use it at work, you get brownie points" (SYAP Interview). Therefore even where people were uncomfortable or unfamiliar with the language, it began to creep into their vocabulary. This was also noted by some project users, in this case a user manager:

"We must use all those words, because community education comes up with all those jargon words, you know. ... Then you pick up all these words in time! You're writing the minutes, and this word's coming out, and you're writing down something, thinking what are they talking about? ... To me, you don't need to use all those big words. I think it's all just a kind of 'in' thing. ... I don't see the need for all this nonsense! But you pick up some of these words right enough as you're going along" (SCL Interview).

In summary this research found mixed views on the appropriateness of empowerment language for users. However the literature is more uniformly critical of the professionalisation of empowerment language, whereby users and workers have increasingly different definitions (Servian 1996). Empowerment is increasingly seen as a "professional metaphor" (Heller 1989 p8) within "the new paternalism" (Brandon in Croft and Beresford 1988a p16). Baistow (1994) argues the user voice is being silenced as the divide grows between professionals who do and users who are done to:

"Those who do the empowering are increasingly likely to be health and welfare professionals: social workers, health visitors, nurses, community clinical psychologists, psychotherapists etc. and managers in a variety of organisational settings. Those to whom empowerment is done are most likely to be users/ clients/ patients or employees" (p37).

Over a decade ago Rappaport (1985) urged health professionals to adopt empowerment terminology in place of the disempowering, professional language of medicine and illness. Now the language of empowerment is itself accused of reflecting professional ideology, as represented in the ever-expanding literature promoting empowerment as a professional practice or tool (e.g. Adams 1990; Baistow 1994; Barr and Cochran 1992; Braye and Preston-Shoot 1995; Kondrat 1995; Lee 1994; Means and Smith 1994; and Smale 1993).

Empowerment and Ideology: Rhetoric versus Reality

"The word 'empowerment' has been and is being used as a term of convenience, to justify the maintenance of disempowering policies and practices, rather than achieve their elimination" (Rees 1991 p3).

Whilst there are varied opinions on the use of empowerment language by workers and users, there is near unanimous cynicism about politicians' and policy-makers' use of the terminology.

Empowerment language is recognised as a carrier of ideology and expression of power (Fried 1994). The terminology has simply "tarted up" (Mitchell 1989 p14) traditional policies and practices (Berry 1988b; Craig et al 1990; Rees 1991; Ward and Mullender 1991). For example Colenutt and Cutten (1994) warn that "We must be cautious of government intentions in using 'community empowerment' as a method of urban regeneration" (p237), whilst Morley (1995) argues that the New Right's empowerment policies "have sinister undertones" (p8) which relate individual psychology to material circumstances. Harding et al (1993) repeat such concerns about the distance between rhetoric and reality in relation to community care:

"As the government emphasises empowerment and participation, its commitment to user-led community care and adequate resources to underpin it remains at the very least uncertain" (p20).

Amongst the commentators there was a similar distrust of politicians' and policy-makers' use of the term, as "There's the rhetoric and reality issue here - there is a huge gap" (EP Interview). Commentators pointed to the promotion of patient participation in the NHS and local government's inclusion of empowerment within social strategies (e.g. Central Regional Council 1991; Strathclyde Regional Council 1993), claiming their experiences of these powerholders included a lack of political support, financial cutbacks, blocking or disruptive management styles, and general disinterest. This clashed somewhat with these organisations' use of empowerment language and promises of increased participation, power and resources for communities:

"People are beginning to feel very disillusioned about the word empowerment I think, just in the fact it's always used by Strathclyde Regional councillors, ... and everybody's using it now, and people are just not feeling empowered at all. ... It's all very well having the rhetoric, but in practice people experience it as not empowering. In fact they're not listened to, far less what they want taken on board" (SCL Interview).

Clearly shared use of empowerment terminology does not guarantee similar practice, in fact masking significant differences in ideology. Hugo Young (1996) claims empowerment's broad appeal comes from its vagueness, as "the entire point of the deployment of these words is that they should be as inclusive and therefore as empty as possible" (The Guardian 16.1.96). Amongst service users and volunteers in particular, this gap between rhetoric and reality had certainly discredited empowerment language:

"I don't like it, empowerment. ... I've sat with many a person that's so powerful, it's unbelievable. But what I find when you're sitting in a group - the so-called grey suits - it's like a battle between them. It's like to see

who can come away with the biggest jargon or who's above who. And I sit and just think it's pathetic. Nine times out of ten I don't have a clue what they're talking about. And this is what you call empowerment!" (DCHP Interview).

Earlier, in relation to the Roots of Empowerment, the broad political popularity of empowerment was noted. Here it is worth restating that whilst the word was once limited to the left of the political spectrum, it is now identified within all shades of political opinion (Baistow 1994; Clarke and Stewart 1992b; Colenutt and Cullen 1994). This popularity, and in particular empowerment's adoption by the "traditionalists and people who use them in quite misplaced ways" (DCHP Interview), made the language less attractive, even anathema, to some commentators. The diverse definitions coming from such contrasting ideologies makes empowerment's meaning unclear, and it becomes a "very dangerous word to bandy about" (DCHP Interview):

"I don't use it [empowerment] now. I suppose it's about this p.c. thing - it's not p.c. to mention it anymore, because it has been hijacked by the right-wing, just as the word community has. In community care and things like that the emphasis is on individual responsibility again, rather than collective action. ... The present government had used particular words to suggest that they were supportive of certain movements and certain groups, and at the end of the day it was exactly the opposite" (SCL Interview).

Such ideological tensions between left and right highlight both empowerment's broad appeal, and its tendency to lack clarity. Thus one person's empowerment may be seen as another's oppression (Clarke and Stewart 1992b; Servian 1996).

Conclusion

This chapter has explored language as a second method of empowerment practice. The need to look at empowerment language in this way was first demonstrated, before comparing its strengths and weaknesses. The different uses of the terminology by users and professionals was reviewed, and ideological implications highlighted. Overall empowerment language has diverse and 'woolly' meaning and interpretation, yet its ongoing popularity is in part explained by commentators' claims that the term, unlike any other, embraces the complexity and multi-dimensionality of their practice. However there remains some disquiet at empowerment's jargonistic element and its use across the ideological spectrum.

A third and final method of empowerment practice is now explored in relation to participants' different types of involvement.

3.3 TYPES OF INVOLVEMENT

Introduction

"All genuine and lasting empowerment must involve ... action by the poor themselves" (Friedmann 1992 p76).

This chapter explores a third critical method of empowerment practice: user involvement. Classifications of user involvement are first discussed, suggesting that existing multi-level conceptual models are useful but restrictive in assuming some types of involvement are inherently superior to others. The analysis promoted here alternatively suggests that types are simply different, with each having its own strengths and weaknesses.

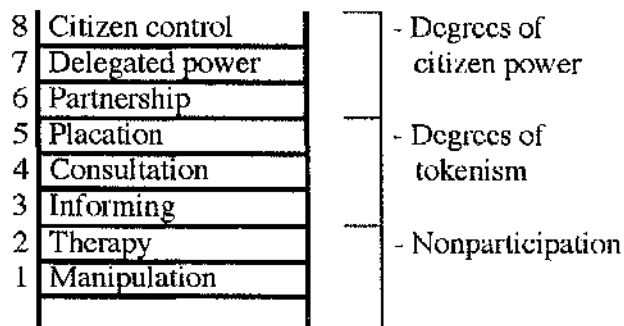
Overall seven types of user involvement are identified and discussed here: getting involved, setting the empowerment agenda, implementation and service delivery, volunteering, becoming paid workers, representation and management, and finally passive or non-involvement.

Typologies of User Involvement

"There are different levels of empowerment, so you can empower people to be active at all sorts of levels" (FCLD Interview).

Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation (illustrated in Figure 3) has been highly influential in conceptualising empowerment as a multi-level construct, embodying different types of involvement.

Figure 3: Arnstein's (1969) Eight Rungs on a Ladder of Citizen Participation (p217)



This layered model has been widely replicated and adapted across contexts and client groups (Dailly 1992; Davidson 1998; Hallett 1987; Jones 1992; Stewart and Taylor 1995; Strathclyde Regional Council undated; Whittell 1993). Windle and Cibulka (1981 in Hallett 1987 p12) add two new strands to Arnstein's degree of citizen power, representing functions (evaluation, service giving, governing, planning, enabling, and authorising) and participation (communities, citizens, employees and consumers). Hoyes et al (1993) propose a six rung ladder of involvement in community care (replicated in Figure 4), also clearly rooted in Arnstein's analysis.

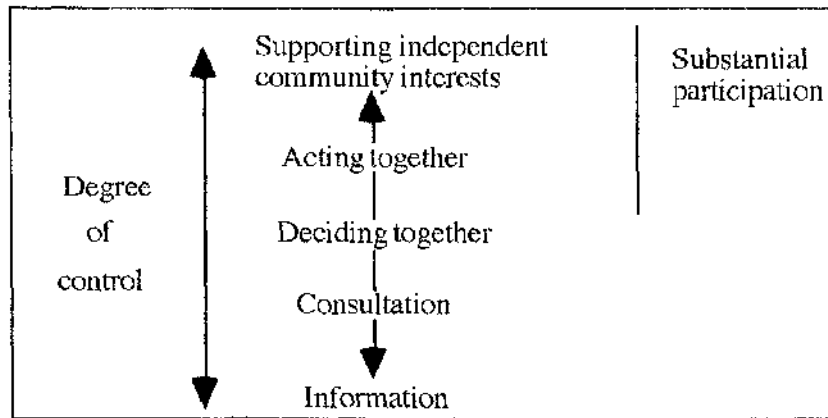
Figure 4: Hoyes et al's (1993) Hierarchy of Degrees of Empowerment (p9)

HIGH	Users have the authority to take decisions
	Users have the authority to take selected decisions
	Users views are sought before decisions are finalised
	Users may take the initiative to influence decisions
	Decisions are publicised and explained before implementation
LOW	Information is given about decisions made

Such models usefully reflect multiple definitions of empowerment, with Arnstein's conceptualisation undoubtedly having "enduring quality" (Willow 1997 p100). However their assumption that upper rungs are superior to those below is more problematic. For example Arnstein's (1969) labelling of the lower types of involvement as clearly subordinate has to be questioned (Baxter 1996; Willow 1997). Such ranking fails to explain first why people do not necessarily opt for the 'highest' levels of participation even when these are offered (Stewart and Taylor 1995), and second why some users actively seek the 'lower' types of involvement, such as children and young people, who tend to prefer adult guidance and support rather than 'citizen control' (Willow 1997).

Wilcox (1994) alternatively proposes a five rung ladder of participation (illustrated in Figure 5), whose arrows suggest not fixed but varying types of involvement over times, situations and users. Stewart and Taylor's (1995) "cycles of involvement" (p68) also suggest individuals seek different types of involvement with varying amounts of responsibility throughout their lives. Baxter (1996) recognises that "different levels of participation are appropriate for different actors and different situations" (p7; also Robson et al 1997). South Lanarkshire Council similarly developed their "wheel of empowerment" in response to Arnstein's limitations, claiming "problems of aiming for inappropriate levels of community empowerment can be overcome" by representing a range of approaches "without suggesting that the aim is always to climb to the top of the ladder" (Davidson 1998 p14).

Figure 5: Wilcox's (1994) Ladder of Participation



Wilcox (1994) uses his ladder to suggest that, rather than perceiving some types of involvement as inherently superior, participants should be honest about what involvement users can expect. Thus consultation is not tokenism if users are never promised power-sharing, and consequently effective participation depends on participants' satisfaction with their own type of involvement. Willow (1997) offers supporting findings that some of the most successful children's participatory initiatives represent Arnstein's lower rungs of information and consultation. Baxter (1996) adds that participants' stake in a project is more critical than the level of their involvement.

Barnes and Walker (1996) recommend user involvement at all levels as a principle of empowerment. Supporting their approach, this research explores seven types of involvement, without any one type considered superior to another.

1. Getting Involved

Getting involved is a type of involvement which all users obviously experience, with projects considering "getting people in from the street" (SCL Interview) as a key challenge and major achievement. This research found projects generally "had an open door policy" or "accepted anybody that's come in" (SAMH Interview). Specific project users were actively targeted for involvement, for example due to their powerlessness, need, poverty or vulnerability, following Alinsky's assertion that poverty means being without power as well as money (Macleod undated) and Simon's (1990) argument that:

"Empowerment, in short, is a series of attacks on *subordination* of every description - psychic, physical, cultural, sexual, legal, political, economic and technological" (p28, emphasis added).

Therefore although projects worked with different user groups, they commonly sought users who had their "own experiences of distress" (SAMH Document¹), "who tend to reject or be excluded from existing ... provision" (SYAP Document²), "who are unemployed, or on low incomes and are poorly qualified" (SCL Document³) and who come "from the least favoured sections of society ... in neighbourhoods or areas where a spirit of decay and hopelessness has taken hold" (FCLD Document⁴). Seeking to involve such people in need raised considerable challenges for these generally small and poorly-resourced projects, which in themselves had little power to change users' disempowering social, structural or environmental conditions.⁵ Whilst these groups are critical to empowerment practice, they are also the most difficult to involve:

"The most marginalised are not those who spontaneously join with others to act towards a common goal: they are the ones who remain isolated, lacking time, energy, confidence, skills, and money to put into community action; those whose struggle for daily existence wears away the power to resist" (Carabine 1996 p70).

Almost all users voluntarily joined projects, with the exception of the Empowerment Project, which most commentators recognised as imposed by the Health Board on the ward. Patients, relatives and staff thus had little choice in their involvement, with this imposition offered as one explanation for the project's consequent difficulties:

"From the very beginning I was aware that the people didn't choose the ward, the relatives didn't choose the ward, the staff didn't. They were not really involved in the decision. I reckon that's where most of the problems have come from" (EP Interview).

Varied reasons for initial involvement are identified in the literature, together amounting to "a minefield" of explanations for user involvement (Harding et al 1993 p20). This research similarly found diverse reasons, including simply being interested, curious or "looking for something to do" (DCHP Interview); being attracted to specific events or services; seeking specific information or support; and wanting to create new provision such as a local women's group (SW&H) or an asthma support group (DCHP). Users from the SAMH Advocacy and Empowerment Group got involved "because of our own experience" of receiving "a bad deal from a service" (SAMH Interviews), thus being "motivated by the injustices that they have

1 Tait, Sue (1994) SAMH Advocacy and Empowerment Training Group: Evaluation, February 1994.

2 Carstairs, Grant (1994) Stirling Youth Action Project Evaluation Report, July 1994.

3 Hamilton, Edith and Paterson, Margaret (1993) Evaluation of Second Chance Learning.

4 Foundation for Community Leadership Development (1990) Overview of Aims, Objectives and Activities 1989/90.

⁵ Meeting users' immediate needs as a precondition of empowerment is discussed in (4.1) Preconditions for Empowerment (Meeting Immediate Presenting Need, pp166-9).

suffered while using the mental health services" (SAMH Document⁶). In many cases, projects' key attraction was the opportunity to do something new and escape from everyday life, as noted by this member of the Stirling Women and Health Project's outdoor activities group:

"It was a chance to do things I hadn't done before, you know. We did a lot. We did abseiling, we got training in canoeing and kayaking, we done wind surfing, and skiing, and bellydancing and gorge walking. You know it was endless. It was just a great experience, to go fac here, fac the Top of the Town, away" (SW&H Interview).

Importantly, projects have to tap into such individual motivations, such as Second Chance Learning who aimed to build on students' "thirst for learning" (SCL Interview).

2. Setting the Empowerment Agenda

"Who takes responsibility for enacting acts of empowerment?" (EP Interview).

Stewart and Taylor (1995) claim that setting the empowerment agenda is critical, as "what gets onto the agenda for discussion and what is excluded ... is central to community empowerment" (p11 discussing Lukes 1974; also Bachrach and Baratz 1970).

Users not only spurred projects' initial creation, but in some cases also directed them towards an empowerment objective. For example Stirling Youth Action Project's users recalled that workers "asked us what we wanted" (SYAP Interview), and similarly the Lothian Coalition of Disabled People claimed their agenda "comes from the grassroots and works its way up through the organisation" (LCDP Interviews), ultimately creating a truly user-led, empowerment-oriented organisation:

"We all feel fine about being able to say promoting empowerment, promoting independence for disabled people, because it's an organisation run by disabled people. If it wasn't, that wouldn't be the right thing to say, ... but I think it is right for an organisation that's principally managed by disabled people" (LCDP Interview).

This research confirmed however such user-led agendas appear not to guarantee consequent user support. For example Stirling Women and Health Project claimed "all our activities are based on requests for help from the community" (SW&H

⁶ Tait, Sue (1994) SAMH Advocacy and Empowerment Training Group: Evaluation, February 1994.

Document⁷), and that their empowerment agenda "actually came from the women in the communities" (SW&H Interview). Yet although self-help groups and other activities were created in response to local requests, they ultimately attracted very few local women, and in some cases struggled to remain viable (SW&H Fieldnotes).⁸

This research found that for some projects, such as the Empowerment Project, "empowerment just isn't on the agenda at all" (EP Interview). As their six month review concluded:

"The initiatives that they [the project] are promoting stay, in the minds of most ward staff, in the realm of entertainment or diversion and the underlying principle of the project - empowerment - is not widely shared" (EP Document⁹).

Nursing staff rejected the project's assertion that their nursing input was critical, or even relevant, to the empowerment agenda, arguing for example that "I'm a nurse, and that's why I'm here. I'm here to make sure people are clean and warm and dry. I'm not here to help them build models" (nurse quoted in Murray 1995 p38). The question of "Who should progress issues beyond nursing care?" (EP Interview), and thus who has responsibility for empowerment, remained unanswered throughout the lifetime of the Empowerment Project.

3. Implementation and Service Delivery

"I think people are empowered at all different levels, not just by receiving services, but finally by being taken seriously and being able to offer something" (LCDP Interview).

Project users became involved in implementing and delivering services for two main reasons. First, although every project had paid workers, their small staff teams ensured users and volunteers were often required to run project activities. Second, project philosophies actively promoted this type of user involvement, with passive consumption of services seen as inconsistent with an empowering approach and as failing to tap into users' expertise.

Commentators gave numerous illustrations of users delivering their own services. For example young people working with Stirling Youth Action Project organised their

⁷ Stirling Women and Health Project Press Release.

⁸ This issue of non-involvement is explored later in this chapter (7. Passive and Non-Involvement, pp157-162).

⁹ Killeen, Damien (1993) Empowerment Project Six Month Review 21.5.93.

own raves and summer activities programmes, having responsibility for all aspects of planning such as seeking funding, budgeting, organising activities, publicity, and accessing premises and transport (SYAP Document¹⁰). On two specific occasions (both raves) the young people failed to meet their agreed organisational responsibilities, so the project let the events be cancelled, claiming their role was not youth service provision but the promotion of young people as "active participants in joint action rather than passive consumers of a service" (SYAP Document¹¹). Although some adult participants complained this approach confused and alienated young people, the young users themselves argued it was superior to more traditional methods, where adults take all the responsibility (and the credit). As one organiser of the summer activities programme explained:

"We kent what was going on behind the scenes and we kent everything that was going to happen. If things went wrong, we kent it was our fault, and we could learn from that. It was quite good working with the youth workers. It wasn't like they were overpowering us, so that was better that way. At the end of it, we were like 'Well, we helped do that'. ... It was really good when everything turned out right and everybody thought it was brilliant!" (SYAP Interview).

Users as Experts

Commentators suggested that user involvement in service delivery taps into users' specialist expertise. For example, users became recognised experts in psychiatric medication, advocacy and the politics of the mental health movement (all SAMH Advocacy and Empowerment Group), or asthma, men's health, postnatal depression and child safety (all Drumchapel Community Health Project). Users also developed expertise in research and evaluation. For example the Drumchapel volunteers carried out their own local surveys into playground safety and home safety, whilst Stirling Youth Action Project promoted user-led evaluation throughout their summer activities programme, using a group diary, video diary, individual evaluation sheets and a final report written jointly by workers and participants (SYAP Document¹²). As one young user recalled:

"We had a wee book that everybody could write their comments in. That was good too. If they didn't like something they could write it was shite, and if they liked something they could write it was good. Everybody was kind of writing their opinions in the book, their true opinions" (SYAP Interview).

¹⁰ Stirling Youth Action Project (1993) Progress Reports April 93, May 1993, and May 1994, and Beaton, Janice (1994) St Ninian's Summer Planning Group: Report for BACE 2 Jordanhill College of Education.

¹¹ Callaghan, Frances (1991) Stirling Youth Action Project: The Youth Action Approach, 28.11.91.

¹² Martin, Ruth; Callaghan, Frances and Ross, Veronica (1994) Partnership in Practice: A Joint Report on St Ninian's Summer Activities for Teenagers '94, Stirling Youth Action Project and Central Regional Council Community Education Service.

Users' expertise was not only recognised in their new knowledge and skills, but also through their personal experiences of, for example, psychiatric treatment (SAMH); being a young person (SYAP); having a disability (LCDP); having a difficult or unfulfilling school experience (SCL); or living in a deprived housing scheme (DCHP). Consequently "first and foremost they are the experts in this field" (SAMH Document¹³). However users do not always attract such recognition. Keville (undated) notes that mental health service users acting as trainers seem more often encouraged to recall personal experiences than comment on 'professional' issues of policy or practice. Whilst the SAMH Group of user trainers found personal testimony to be a powerful training tool "to impart personal experiences and to use these in a positive and challenging way to try to change negative attitudes from professional bodies" (SAMH Document¹⁴), they too experienced prejudicial professional attitudes to their expertise:

"I have found people's attitudes changed completely when they found out I was a user [of mental health services]. I've heard comments like, 'You're very articulate for a user', 'You're very articulate for someone who's handicapped', and 'I wouldn't have invited you if I'd known you were a user!'" (SAMH Interview).

What Role for Workers?

"They didn't need any professional there to tell them what to do, they didn't need any comm. ed.¹⁵ workers, they didn't need any Second Chance workers. They did it themselves" (SCL Interview).

The prominent role played by users in implementing and delivering services raises some questions around paid workers' roles in empowerment-based projects. Within the literature there are many suggested, although few agreed, roles. Nagel (1987) claims workers are both organisers who encourage members to take action, and agents who act for members, whilst Rappaport (1981) identifies empowerment workers as collaborators rather than experts or leaders. Yet others question workers' role in empowerment, with Simon (1994) warning of "power traps" in the imbalance of power between workers and clients, whereby skills and expertise are classed as professional attributes to mystify their roles and attract respect. Grace (1991) claims that empowerment is a misleading term altogether where professionals are involved, with their "a priori agenda" (p331) and retention of ultimate control. Such views support Breton's (1989) warning that:

¹³ Tait, Sue (1994) SAMH Advocacy and Empowerment Training Group: Evaluation, February 1994.

¹⁴ Tait, Sue (1994) SAMH Advocacy and Empowerment Training Group: Evaluation, February 1994.

¹⁵ Community Education.

"I suspect that we group workers want to join with the oppressed but not let go of our self-appointed right to determine what is good for them; and that we are reluctant to learn from the poor and oppressed, because that means giving up our claim to be the experts" (p13).

Simon (1994) however argues that "empowerment does not imply abandoning a client group or neighbourhood to its own devices" (p26), claiming workers provide access to essential resources such as money, materials, technology, markets and leadership. This research also found diverse roles for paid staff where users played highly active roles. Workers claimed to sow the "seeds of ideas" (FCLD Interview), "keep the momentum up when motivation may be flagging" (SAMH Document¹⁶) and help participants "understand the principles of empowerment" (SYAP Interview), consequently playing a critical role in the translation of empowerment principles into practice. Workers were seen to lead, supervise and direct developments, as well as simply "letting it happen" (SAMH Interview). This latter facilitative approach was particularly frequently identified, with observation of project groups suggesting workers encouraged users to take the lead whilst themselves offering advice, skills, counselling and general affirmation (DCHP Fieldnotes; SW&H Fieldnotes). Workers saw facilitation as shaping their new role, whereby "even if I think it's wrong, I've got to go with what they're thinking and just see what happens" (DCHP Interview), and as time-consuming but necessary to promote user participation and equality (SAMH Document¹⁷):

"You have to believe, you have to actually genuinely believe that there is no right or wrong way to do things and that you are not an expert on someone else's life" (FCLD Interview).

However such an approach is not straightforward, with some project staff experiencing difficulties motivating groups without being directive, and others being criticised for acting as "group leaders" not "enablers", despite their intentions to be "facilitators not owners" of groups (SW&H Documents¹⁸).

Research funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (1994) confirms that professionals and users "belonged to different worlds", with decision-making being respectively hierarchical or participative, and structures formal or informal (also Berger 1997). These different worlds may not in themselves be problematic, however

¹⁶ McCollam, Allyson (1994) SAMH Advocacy Training Group: Evaluation of the Group August '93 - February '94.

¹⁷ Tait, Sue (1994) SAMH Advocacy and Empowerment Training Group: Evaluation, February 1994.

¹⁸ Stirling Women and Health Project Draft Volunteer Policy 1993/4 ; Stirling Women and Health Project Annual Report 1992.

difficulties can arise when participants pretend the power differences do not exist (Herd 1995b):

"We DO belong to different worlds. That is not A Bad Thing. What we should do, I would suggest, is harness the energy created by bringing those energies together rather than trying to magic them away. Magic isn't magic: it's illusion" (p2)

One commentator named the denial of such power differentials the "donkey jacket mentality", whereby workers believe that trying to look less like professional staff makes them equal to user groups (SYAP Interview). Instead he claimed workers must honestly admit their greater power, as well as the freedom they do (and do not) have and choices they can (and can not) make about whether to hand over this power.

Others echoed this view:

"It's not an equal relationship because the women in the group are the group members and you are the group worker. ... I'm paid to be there, I've not come along out of choice! So there is no point in thinking about it as that we're all the same here and we're all in the same position" (SW&H Interview).

This research found users and volunteers are clear about their differences from project workers. One co-ordinator's attempts to be seen as just another user, as they learned and developed together, left users complaining "It was hard to accept her as the same as us" (SAMH Interview). Another user argued that differences between workers and users had to be acknowledged more openly rather than glossed over:

"We went to an adult education conference, but it was mostly the comm. ed.¹⁹ ones that were there. ... They were all talking, and it's all 'partnership' this and 'partnership' that ..., but they were talking about it all from their point of view as if I was the odd one out. ... It was as if they thought I was one of them, and I had to say, 'No! This is partnership from our point of view!', which was different" (SCL Interview).

4. Volunteering

"It's not about using volunteers. It's about developing people" (DCHP Interview).

All but two projects had volunteers,²⁰ claiming that "we don't see volunteers as a spare pair of hands" (DCHP Interview), and that volunteering helps promote empowerment (SW&H Document²¹) as the "fundamental thread that runs through it all" (SW&H Interview). Volunteers "help blur the distinction between helpers and

¹⁹ Community Education.

²⁰ The exceptions were the SAMH Advocacy and Empowerment Group and the Foundation for Community Leadership Development.

²¹ Stirling Women and Health Project Draft Volunteer Policy 1993/4.

helped" (SW&H Document²²) and engage more easily with project users, being "more 'ordinary' than paid staff - there is not the power relationship" (SW&H Document²³).

Whilst the projects tended to have few volunteers, they carried out diverse activities, including organising self-help groups, publicity, training, counselling, research and evaluation, information-gathering and dissemination, writing reports, networking and representing their project, art and design, participating in management committees, and administration (Fieldnotes various; DCHP Document²⁴). The intensity of involvement ranged from volunteers becoming "part of the furniture" (LCDP Interview) to remaining "on the fringes" (LCDP Interview). Overall the projects appeared to equate empowerment with proactive volunteering rather than those awaiting direction:

"People have got to get involved in some sort of activity or project or whatever, instead of just hanging around waiting for someone to give them something to do. That's not involvement or empowering people" (LCDP Interview).

The focus here is on user volunteers. Several projects also promoted non-user volunteering.²⁵ These volunteers ranged from 'para-professionals', who held similar roles and responsibilities to paid staff, and those more informally involved. Three other projects promoted extensive involvement of user volunteers,²⁶ and these provide the focus of the following discussion.

The Drumchapel project was created with Community Health Volunteers (CHVs) at its heart to overcome "the biggest stumbling block of genuine community participation" (DCHP Document²⁷). Rather than being "a tool that the project uses" (DCHP Document²⁸), the CHVs help shape practice by being "integrated into the project" and "in the driving seat" (DCHP Interviews). This approach offers an alternative to the traditional "two representatives on the management committee" model" (DCHP Document²⁹), recognising that "participation is only effective and

²² Stirling Women and Health Project Draft Volunteer Policy 1993/4.

²³ Stirling Women and Health Project Draft Volunteer Policy 1993/4.

²⁴ Drumchapel Healthy Cities Project (1990) What's a Community Health Volunteer - by the way? [publicity leaflet].

²⁵ Stirling Youth Action Project, Second Chance Learning and the Empowerment Project.

²⁶ Drumchapel Community Health Project, Stirling Women and Health Project, and Lothian Coalition of Disabled People.

²⁷ Kennedy, Aine (undated) 'Health for All': from principles to practice in Drumchapel.

²⁸ Kennedy, Aine; Tannahill, Carol and Curtice, Lisa (1993) Evaluating 'Health for All' Practice at Community Level: The Drumchapel Healthy Cities Project.

²⁹ Kennedy, Aine; Tannahill, Carol and Curtice, Lisa (1993) Evaluating 'Health for All' Practice at Community Level: The Drumchapel Healthy Cities Project.

meaningful if it is empowered participation" (DCHP Document³⁰). Project workers claimed volunteers were encouraged not to "hand hold", with the CHVs agreeing that being "left to get on with it" in these "non-prescriptive" roles was "part of the empowerment of the project" (DCHP Interviews). Workers in fact found that the CHVs challenged their original preconceptions of a minimal volunteer role:

"What the volunteers showed was they were much more sophisticated that we were giving them credit for. ... They did have ideas of their own and could follow them through" (DCHP Interview).

Despite positive examples, there were issues about volunteer "recruitment, training and support" (SYAP Document³¹) in all projects. Commentators feared that volunteers became too dependent, yet also that the experience and skills of those moving on could not easily be replaced. In addition the practical need for volunteers created a tension between actively recruiting a generalist pool of volunteers, or waiting for individuals as volunteers to approach the project with specific proposals or needs. There was a related temptation to view all those who approached projects as potential volunteers, rather than as individuals seeking support. Finally there were difficulties in effectively involving volunteers in running and managing projects, with management structures tending to remain dominated by paid workers even where volunteers' confidence and skills increased.³²

Volunteers themselves expressed concerns about their roles, rights and responsibilities. For example the Drumchapel CHVs called for fewer formal meetings with less jargon, less bureaucracy, and training on meetings skills (DCHP Document³³). Volunteers also complained of a lack of dedicated workspace, leaving them feeling in the way of paid staff (DCHP, LCDP, SW&H Fieldnotes).

To Pay or Not To Pay?

Some volunteers preferred the term 'unpaid worker' to volunteer, claiming it better reflected their work and responsibility, and placing them on a more equal footing with paid staff. However in several projects "the issue was raised that people needed to be paid for what they do" (SAMH Interview), with debates around volunteers' payment described as "a hot potato!" (DCHP Interview). In all cases, volunteers received costs for travel, childcare and so on, so this debate focused on wages for volunteers.

³⁰ Kennedy, Aine (1994) Practising 'Health for All' in a Glasgow Housing Scheme: The Drumchapel Healthy Cities Project 1990-1992.

³¹ Stirling Youth Action Project Progress Report December 1993.

³² This issue is discussed further below (6. Representation and Decision-Making, pp150-7).

³³ Drumchapel Community Health Project (1992) Management Minutes 18.12.92.

Volunteers undoubtedly played a crucial role in 'staffing' projects with so few paid workers, and participants accepted that initiatives could not continue without them. Drumchapel Community Health Project calculated that their CHVs stayed on average for two and a half years, and equated to five full-time posts (DCHP Document³⁴). The thorny issue of payment particularly arose for these volunteers when they were asked to train paid lay health workers from another area. The CHVs consequently (and unsuccessfully) proposed the project "create jobs for volunteers (perhaps like the lay health workers)" (DCHP Document³⁵).

Volunteers supporting payment complained that they carried out work suitable for paid staff, with other participants also recognising volunteers risked being a "cheap option" and an "extra kept at the margins" (SW&H Document³⁶). In one project volunteers were not even recruited due to fears about "exploitation" (FCLD Interview). However those supporting unpaid volunteering wanted to keep the distinction between paid work and unpaid volunteering, claiming "I don't agree with volunteering to replace paid jobs, I think it's out of order" (DCHP Interview), and arguing that volunteering offers unique attractions:

"The thing about volunteering is the fact you've got to do it if you like it, if you want to do it. And I definitely want to do this kind of work. And I'm still gaining experience and that's what I like. And at the same time I'm trying to be part of making this a better place for my four kids growing up" (DCHP Interview).

Paid workers claimed unpaid volunteers have "much more freedom of choice" in workload and working hours, noting "They're free to campaign, they're free to go away if they want. They don't have to be in at 9 o'clock every morning!" (DCHP Interview). Volunteering was seen as one option to tackle social exclusion through recognising community experience and skills, rather than creating yet another layer of professionals:

"What's happened to people, like the people who live in Drumchapel, is that they have been excluded from civic life because of material deprivation. And how do you get that back? You can either make an argument that says they should always be paid every step of the way for everything that they do and we all become professionals. Or you say, well, if we're going to involve people in civic life what we should do is we should fund projects which enable people to do that in very specific and concrete ways" (DCHP Interview).

³⁴ Craig, Pauline and Kerr, Susan (1995) Drumming Up Health in Drumchapel: Annual Report 1994/5.

³⁵ Craig, Pauline and Kerr, Susan (1995) Drumming Up Health in Drumchapel: Annual Report 1994/5.

³⁶ Stirling Women and Health Project Draft Volunteer Policy 1993/4.

5. Becoming Paid Workers

A small number of paid workers had formerly been users or volunteers who "sort of fell into" these roles (FCLD Interview). The transition from user to worker was generally described as "No problem!" (SW&I Interview) and as "a natural progression" (SYAP Interview), although the need for additional structures and support was highlighted. Overall the opportunity for such progress through projects was welcomed rather than resisted, supporting Mondros and Wilson's (1994) claim that such examples are "success stories".

Ex-user workers were believed to possess unique skills and abilities. For example Second Chance Learning's community tutors, who tended to be former students, were particularly valuable as they "speak the same language, know people in common and have a measure of credibility in the community" (SCL Document³⁷), and "came through the system that way" (SCL Interview):

"I still feel there's millions of work to be done for the local people - the people who haven't become part of the system. I think they're the forgotten folk. ... I thought because of my background and my feelings, I'm the person to do it because I had the time and the patience. ... So I felt that I could be out on the streets ... talking to people. A lot of them did tell me to 'F. Off!' But it didn't stop me from going back to them, 'cos I might have caught them on a bad day. And quite a lot of the people did stop and persevere with it" (SCL Interview).

This role of the community tutor ensured that Second Chance acted to bridge the gap between local people and mainstream service providers, effectively becoming "a pioneering link between, on the one hand, a community reluctant or afraid to re-enter education and on the other hand, existing education and training providers" (SCL Document³⁸).

6. Representation and Management

"... much of the literature on participation agonises over problems of 'representativeness'" (Jeffrey 1997 p29).

The empowerment literature discusses user involvement in representation and management in great detail, identifying four key issues. First are critiques of powerholders' motives and responses, noting that user involvement is praised where

³⁷ Hamilton, Edith and Paterson, Margaret (1993) Evaluation of Second Chance Learning.

³⁸ McGlashan, Mary (1991) Learning in the Community: Second Chance: The First Four Years 1987-1991.

decision-makers seek credibility and the status quo is not threatened, whilst users' representativeness and abilities are questioned where they dissent (Barnes et al 1996; Croft and Beresford 1988a; Jeffrey 1997):

"Questioning the user group's legitimacy can provide a way of both protecting a perceived diversity of interests, and of reserving ultimate decision-making to the domain of managers or clinicians" (Barnes et al 1996 p15).

Second, the literature identifies numerous problems within user representation and management. For example Jeffrey (1997) found forums and committees were dominated by very few "pseudo-councillors" (p30), whilst McGregor et al (1992) claim community representatives are "too often ... a few unrepresentative, quarrelsome - sometimes corrupt - people" (p4). Third, the literature notes a general failure amongst initiatives to effectively promote empowerment through user representation and management, and thus:

"Community issues seldom seem to get onto the agenda and communities declare themselves satisfied with achievements that in no way match up to the rhetoric of partnership" (Stewart and Taylor 1995 p59).

Finally the literature suggests higher satisfaction with user representation amongst non-users than users, whereby users "tended to see themselves as not having enough power or influence on decision-making" (Breitenbach 1997 p164) and "denied being offered real choices in such important situations" (Servian 1996 p37).

Users as Decision-Makers: Top-Down or Bottom-Up?

This research confirmed the literature's identification of a key distinction between top-down and bottom-up approaches to representation and decision-making (Beresford and Croft 1993; S Young 1996), with Barnes and Walker (1996) noting that users' demands for involvement "are usually concerned with a bottom-up (democratic) conception of empowerment rather than a top-down (professional) one" (p379), whilst their consequent experience more commonly reflects the latter.

Top-down approaches to empowerment represent a one-way relationship whereby those in authority control agendas, involvement and information (S Young 1996). Jeffrey (1997) identifies a "top-down logic" (p26) which effectively restricts participation, limits accountability, discourages debate and consultation, and promotes powerholders' agendas. Conversely bottom-up approaches "relate strongly to the concept of empowerment", being characterised by two-way dialogue, local agenda-setting, and open rather than predetermined goals (S Young 1996 p26). Stephen Young (1996) usefully expands this dichotomy to include a 'yes ... but ...'

strategy, similar to bottom-up approaches but with greater powerholder control, and a 'limited dialogue' strategy, whereby powerholders seek two-way dialogue within limited boundaries.

Some commentators claimed an entirely collective approach to decision-making whereby "everybody went in as equals, ... everybody was on the same level" (SAMH Interview). For example the SAMH Advocacy and Empowerment Group designed their own training programme, and Stirling Youth Action Project's local youth action groups identified their own activities or issues. As one group member explained:

"We told them [workers] what we would like to see happening in St Ninian's to make it a better place. ... We decided what we wanted to do and what we'd like to see happening, then we had to go about getting that done" (SW&H Interview).

In other cases, users are consulted or informed about specific proposals. Within the literature there is some debate as to whether this constitutes empowerment, with Barnes and Walker (1996) claiming consultation can be "mistaken for empowerment" (p380), whilst Wilcox (1994) warns this can lead to disillusionment and consequent conflict. However Baxter (1996) argues that timing is the critical factor, calling for greater consultation at the early design stages, with Taylor et al (1992) agreeing that early consultation helps prevent involvement being limited to "ratification" (p34) (also Alcock et al 1996; Willow 1997). Supporting such views, this research identified late consultation and a lack of user involvement in decision-making as the roots of numerous difficulties for projects.

In relation to ongoing decision-making, Dailly (1992) found user representation met with little worker support once users' complaints became effectively aired at management level. Robson et al's (1997) voluntary sector research reported that organisations believed that slowly developing user representation structures not only allows time for the skilling and confidence-building of users, but also for staff and managers to realise "users can be involved without upsetting the status quo" (p10) - in itself an interesting perception. Similarly in this research the Empowerment Project staff found nurses and managers less than willing to accept direction or guidance from users (patients or relatives). Thus whilst theoretically accepting the project's aims of user involvement in decision-making, in practice users' attempts to alter the status quo met with denials that problems existed or outright refusals to change:

"Let change happen somewhere so that it doesn't affect me'. That kind of approach was based on a total misunderstanding or misconception of what the whole thing is about" (EP Interview).

Robson et al (1997) claim most successful initiatives combine top-down and bottom-up approaches, whilst the least successful lack clarity and consistency of approach. As the earlier discussion of the Empowerment Project's experience demonstrated,³⁹ a lack of clarity and agreement around the relative strengths of top-down (health board-led) and bottom-up (ward participant-led) approaches was a critical block to progress: "We very consciously went in at the bottom, where patients, relatives and staff are, and we will be able to tell people who use these kinds of words, what happens when you do that. ... For us the bottom was exactly where we were working. But what was their [health board's] perception of the bottom? Did that miss out on the staff?" (EP Interview).

Users as Managers

Within the literature the role of user managers is frequently questioned, particularly within committee structures. This reliance on traditional decision-making structures may help explain why user power fails to effect change (Robson et al 1997), and suggests management committees may be inappropriate for empowerment-based initiatives (Read and Wallcraft 1992).

Four of the projects studied in this research had user managers within their committee structures (DCHP, LCDP, SCL and SW&H). Only the Lothian Coalition of Disabled People's committee consisted entirely of users (members), whilst the other three combined users and professionals.⁴⁰ This research found mixed views of user management. User-led management committees were seen by some commentators as "a good vehicle ... for local people to get involved, get empowered" (SW&H Interview). User managers themselves argued that their involvement brings committees "right down to earth" (SCL Interview), offering an alternative, more informed perspective as "We know what's going on for one thing. We can see for ourselves when we come in and use the project" (SW&H Interview):

"I think it's a good thing, because they know what the women are wanting. They're hearing themselves what the areas need. I think it's a good idea. It's not someone that's living away in a big house and has not got a clue what they need or what they want" (SW&H Interview).

User managers also claimed management involvement helps them repay projects for their help, and supports overloaded project workers. For example Second Chance

³⁹ As outlined in (2.3) Aims of Empowerment (Agreeing a Vision: Tensions Between Aims of Empowerment, An Illustration: The Empowerment Project, pp99-100).

⁴⁰ Of the exceptions, one had line management rather than collective management (SAMH), another had fairly haphazard committee management arrangements which eventually petered out (FCLD), and the remaining two debated and then rejected user management in favour of committees of professionals (EP, SYAP: their experience is discussed later in this chapter under 6. Representation and Management, Who Wants People Power? pp155-7). The management structures of each project are outlined in Appendix One: Project Summaries (pp300-312).

Learning's management committee produced the project's development plan and negotiated new contracts for staff:

"I don't know if the project leader could have done all that to be honest. How could the project leader have did all that we had to do, all them things, all that development plan that we had to do? ... There's not enough time to do all the things you want to do even as it is" (SCL Interview).

User management however involves complex roles, with users "wearing different hats" (SCI Interview) as both recipients of services and employers of those services' providers. Within Second Chance Learning, whilst user management ensured students felt "we've all got our say", some participants "felt a bit uncomfortable being both committee members and students" (SCL Document⁴¹). Rees (1991) warns that too much role complexity and conflict can be disempowering, supporting Harding et al's (1993) claim that:

"People do not fall neatly into categories of 'users' and 'providers' - most of us have a foot in both camps - which means there is considerable emotional involvement in our work. Though this can generate energy and drive, it can sometimes block our ability to hear what others have to say" (p21).

However user management also meets with considerable criticism as an approach to empowerment. Users managers are described as lacking in confidence and "terrified" (SW&H Interview) of their 'privileged' position. Undoubtedly the shift from using projects to simultaneously using and managing required a major change in expectations and responsibilities. As one user manager explained, she joined her project's Outdoor Activities Group with little expectation of the challenges ahead:

"All I wanted to do was go canoeing! ... It's been a big transition. ... I don't feel I have any power. I'm just the mouthpiece that takes the stick" (in SW&H Fieldnotes).

Such issues clearly discourage some potential participants, with projects experiencing difficulties attracting or retaining users within management committees, reflecting Breitenbach's (1997) findings. Second Chance Learning found that community representatives were relatively plentiful, yet student (user) representatives were less keen on management responsibility. Whilst a series of sub-committees proved less daunting, the management committee remained characterised by inconsistent and insufficient membership (SCL Document⁴²). This lack of interest was explained by commentators who described committees as onerous or "boring" (SCL Interview), with the responsibility and time required considered a serious disincentive.

⁴¹ Second Chance Learning Management Minutes 22.10.91.

⁴² McGlashan, Mary (1991) Learning in the Community: Second Chance: The First Four Years 1987-1991.

Interestingly however, several projects experienced difficulties maintaining agency involvement at management level (e.g. SW&H Fieldnotes; DCHP Document⁴³), thus clearly it is not only user managers who are less than enthusiastic.

Finally, some workers claimed user-led management committees were "undermining" and "not liberating for me" (SCL Interview; also Fieldnotes, various), rather than acting as forums for guidance and support. Workers with management experience expressed particular frustration that their management came from users with little understanding of management responsibilities or approaches. Training and formal support for user managers was commonly recommended, although it was clear this would not solve all the above problems.

Who Wants People Power?

Despite the popular rhetoric of "power to the people" (SW&H Interview), questions remain as to how far user involvement in representation and management progresses empowerment.

User management was in fact considered and rejected within two projects (the Empowerment Project and Stirling Youth Action Project). The Empowerment Project's committee debated and then rejected the option of inviting relatives, patients and nursing staff (beyond the ward manager) into management structures. Whilst some commentators argued this absence of key participants created "an air of abstraction that was incredible!" (EP Interview), others claimed these groups would find the conflictual management meetings exhausting and "intimidating" (EP Interview). This assumption that management is an inappropriate type of user involvement reflects Robson et al's (1997) finding that some voluntary organisations restricted users' management role due to perceptions of their disabilities or conditions:

"Among the problems raised were that users could be fatigued, stressed or too emotional; or through ill-health be less effective at decision-making; or might not have the level of literacy required for committee papers; or would have difficulties in travelling; or might lack motivation; or be institutionalised" (p6).

However notably they found organisations which promoted user management reported fewer problems than predicted, and that "conditions which were previously perceived as disabling did not create a barrier to participation" (p11). Indeed some Empowerment Project commentators suggested the conflict and tension

⁴³ Drumchapel Community Health Project (1991) Progress Report IV: August-October 1991.

characterising management meetings may have been less marked had the health board's consumers been sitting at the same table. Perhaps more insightful here is Robson et al's (1997) finding that one organisation rejected user involvement as the users did not sufficiently support the managers' value base. In the Empowerment Project, the Health Board partners may also have believed the awarding of greater power to nursing staff, increased openness about Health Board practice and policies, and a consumer presence within management would result in their cultural and organisational values being seriously questioned.

In this example the suitability of user representation was considered and rejected by those outwith the user groups. In the second example, Stirling Youth Action Project, users themselves discussed and rejected such involvement. Although the young people directed the projects' work through survey consultations, informal streetwork and participation in youth action groups, they managed neither project resources nor personnel. Whilst the project leader recognised their social action approach suggested management by young people rather than professionals, she found this did not appeal to users, and was keen that "young people's involvement in managing the Project should not be of a tokenistic nature" (SYAP Document⁴⁴). Thus "the young people took from the Project what they wanted" (SYAP Interview):

"The young people were saying, 'We value this project but we don't want our relationship changed in that way'. ... Young people were telling us loudly and clearly that what concerns them is having decent youth opportunities developed in their community. ... That was their primary concern" (SYAP Interview).

This experience supports Robson et al's (1997) finding that users were less interested in being managers than receiving a good service, with users who do seek management responsibility being attracted to wholly user-led, rather than more traditional, organisations. This may also relate to workers taking over and professionalising participative structures (Croft and Beresford 1988a), expecting local people to conform to professional and institutional organisational practices (McConnell and Taylor 1988), and structures frequently being integrated into conservative, bureaucratic processes (Labonte 1991). As Heginbotham (1992) concludes:

"Traditional committee structures may not be the best way of organising when people are not used to such structures, and where debate must of necessity be free-ranging and divergent" (p17).

It is worth noting here that almost all projects experienced some difficulties with their management arrangements, regardless of levels of user involvement, with managers

⁴⁴ Stirling Youth Action Project Steering Group Minutes 29.3.94.

commonly having a "vague and undefined" role (SYAP Document⁴⁵). These issues are thus part of wider debates (not explored here) about the relative effectiveness of different management approaches.

Herd's (1995b) ten "golden rules of user involvement" offer some guidance here. He recommends user representatives should be service users; users should represent other users and not become 'super service users'; the right groups should be involved, as "if service providers want a spade, don't ask a shovel" (p3); no tokenism; make involvement easy through the language, organisation, transport, conduct and location used; take account of the costs of user involvement; listen to bad news; provide training for representatives; use users as trainers too; and finally accept that "There are no Right Answers, only different points of view" (p3).

7. Passive and Non-Involvement

"If ... participation is so rewarding and effective, why doesn't everyone participate?" (Wandersman and Giamartino 1980 p218).

Within some projects commentators "felt quite comfortable with the amount of people in it" (SAMH Interview), however in others low participation rates brought disappointment. Thus whilst SAMH's final group of seven trainees was deemed manageable, Stirling Youth Action Project's evaluation noted "the Project had worked with fewer young people than ... expected" (SYAP Document⁴⁶).

Weighing Up the Costs and Benefits

The literature suggests individuals make complex calculations of the costs and benefits of involvement before taking part (Littrell and Hobbes 1989; Smith et al 1977), with successful participation depending on frequent, varied and selective incentives and minimal costs (Prestby et al 1990).

This research identified a similar weighing up process, helping to explain why non-involvement happened even in projects established in response to perceived or known needs, where the process of engaging users was "very very slow. We're still at the stage of trying to attract people through the door" (SW&H Interview). For example Stirling Women and Health Project's workers acknowledged the project "needs the

⁴⁵ Carstairs, Grant (1994) Stirling Youth Action Project Evaluation Report, July 1994.

⁴⁶ Carstairs, Grant (1994) Stirling Youth Action Project Evaluation Report, July 1994.

women in the communities at the end of the day. We cannot just run it with the management committee" (SW&H Interview). Yet even where activities responded to specific requests, user numbers remained low (SW&H Fieldnotes). Suggested explanations for this lack of involvement included women's assumption that seeking support is a sign they are not coping, the centralisation of the project outwith three of the four communities targeted, the absence of dedicated child care provision, and the uncertainty and change caused by high staff turnover. The relatively high number of phone enquiries (SW&H Document⁴⁷) however suggests users may seek types of involvement requiring less "energy, commitment and spare time" (SW&H Document⁴⁸), reflecting McGregor et al's (1992) identification of a lack of time and interest as the two main disincentives to community participation in urban regeneration.

The Foundation for Community Leadership Development experienced more selective non-involvement, finding community activists harder than workers to attract. Whilst their training target was 80% local people to 20% professionals, estimates suggested nearer a 60:40 split (FCLD Interview), explained by workers acting as training gatekeepers or testers, and courses appealing more to professionals. However FCLD sought a "trickle down effect" to activists by improving workers' effectiveness and leadership (FCLD Interview). Critics questioned however whether this actually developed community leadership:

"That is a kind of empowerment, but it's not fundamental community development stuff. It's a kind of indirect way of doing it - training people so they can empower others. ... I don't really see that as community leadership development. It's community worker training, or something like that" (FCLD Interview).

Debate also focuses on whether the quantity of participants is more important than the quality of their involvement. Croft and Beresford (1990) insist that numbers alone should not be the focus of user involvement, and similarly commentators argued that their target populations were relatively small (in terms of both geography and interest group), and that overall outcomes and outputs are as critical as throughputs:

"Somebody could come in and look at this Project, and say, 'How many young people are empowered and make actual decisions?' Well, if that's what the Project's objectives are maybe it wasn't thought out properly. But let's look below that and see what young people have participated in, and how they have influenced things" (SYAP Interview).

⁴⁷ Stirling Women and Health Project (1994) Progress Report 29.6.94.

⁴⁸ Jones, Jane (1992) Stirling Women and Health Project Evaluation.

In addition, whilst recognising some user groups were small, workers emphasised their participants had significant levels of need. For example Stirling Women and Health Girls' Group worked with young women experiencing stressful family lives, with the growth of these "real people" (in SW&H Fieldnotes) considered worth the expense:

"We're talking about the growth and development of individual people. ... It's like school [league] tables - what's the starting points that people are at in terms of their individual growth, compared to saying that's what people have achieved" (SW&H Interview).

Projects working with small numbers also claimed to be effecting wider change, for example through altering social attitudes, improving access to or distribution of resources, and influencing mainstream working practices (SYAP Document⁴⁹). Projects which "made a significant impact on a limited number of individuals" (SYAP Document⁵⁰) therefore reflect Stewart and Taylor's (1995) claim that community initiatives "provide a modest but important degree of local empowerment" (p67).

In addition to non-involvement is the type of "passive involvement" (Cohen and Upgoff in MacDonald 1993). Whilst many project users and volunteers played active roles, a good number simply attended projects as "users of the project, not participants in the project" (SW&H Interview). Such passivity disappointed those who argued an opportunity for empowerment was missed:

"Personally I don't think they [users] have played enough of a role. They should have more responsibility for the day-to-day working of things. They don't necessarily need to be on the management committee, but there could be subgroups looking at different things ... or maybe just discussion groups. ... I certainly feel there's a big lack of that, of folk feeling part of it" (SW&H Interview).

Such passivity characterised the Empowerment Project. Patients' active involvement is particularly crucial in institutional settings where recognition of rights is rare and challenging authority especially difficult (Scottish Users Conference 1992). Whilst some participants believed patients' high dependency meant "the people we were trying to empower were beyond it" (EP Interview) and accused the project of "unrealistic expectations" (EP Interview), others claimed this very dependency made their involvement all the more critical:

"The project brief is absolutely clear: that we are about empowering the relationship between patients and relatives and staff. We're saying that ... these patients by their very own condition are incapable of autonomously improving their quality of life. That does not mean to say they can't make

⁴⁹ Carstairs, Grant (1994) Stirling Youth Action Project Evaluation Report, July 1994.

⁵⁰ Carstairs, Grant (1994) Stirling Youth Action Project Evaluation Report, July 1994.

some contribution to it, but they are dependent people. They wouldn't be there otherwise" (EP Interview).

Ownership and Power

"Power is nothing without control" (TV Advertisement for Pirelli tyres March 1997).

This research identified three broad explanations for passive and non-involvement. First, the empowerment literature suggests active involvement depends on participants' ownership of initiatives (Stewart and Taylor 1995; Wilcox 1994). Commentators echoed this view, although notably related ownership to specific groups and activities as much as overall projects. For example Stirling Youth Action Project's young users had "no overall sense of ownership of the Project" (SYAP Document⁵¹), yet expressed ownership of their own local achievements:

"If something did happen up the Top o' the Town, well at least we made it happen, ken what I mean? It was us instead of anybody else, so we all got the respect" (SYAP Interview).

Croft and Beresford (1990) claim that such ownership depends on early user involvement, which helps to explain why the Empowerment Project's initiatives, which were arguably "imposed, brought in from outside" (EP Interview), resulted in an unwillingness to take ongoing responsibility as the project ended.

Second, Jazairy (1989) suggests poor communities only participate "provided they have a sense of power and control over their individual involvement" (no page no.), with Henderson (1995) similarly noting "participation is authentic when we are aware that we count for something, ... when what we say is listened to and acted upon" (p11 in Willow 1997 p14, also Wandersman and Giamartino 1980). In effect, failure to participate may be an indication of empowerment, rather than alienation (Labonte 1991).

The empowerment literature offers an increasingly critical analysis of the lack of real power transfer in traditional methods of involvement, such as public meetings, committees, leaflets and community surveys (Alcock et al 1996; Jeffrey 1997; Stewart and Taylor 1995; Wilcox 1994). There are particular criticisms that participatory structures are simply "bolted on" (Jeffrey 1997), rather than fundamentally challenging or changing decision-making arrangements, and that participation is too often "all or nothing" (Croft and Beresford 1990 p21),

⁵¹ Carstairs, Grant (1994) Stirling Youth Action Project Evaluation Report, July 1994.

discouraging more widespread involvement by demanding heavy commitment. Commentators repeated such criticisms, noting that "very few of them turn up at the management meetings and when they do they don't say anything" (DCHP Interview), supporting other research findings (Breitenbach 1997; Jeffrey 1997). Users may well prefer non-managerial involvement as management methods remain unimaginative and continue to rely on "inviting only one or two users onto management committees" (Scottish Association for Mental Health undated p26).

Third, the corruption of power discourages involvement (Lerner 1986), once "what have hitherto been radical and distinctive interests are incorporated" into formal structures (Stewart and Taylor 1995 p9). Arnstein (1969) claims the "haves" easily co-opt the "have nots" by using their power to "muzzle them" (p218). Freire (1972a) claims the formerly "oppressed" can become "oppressors" once power is tasted, "internalising the image of the oppressor" (p31) and replicating their own experiences of power relations. The commentators also identified users' tendency to replicate power relationships of favouritism, domination and oppression, for example when "certain individuals go at a far faster pace, the power actually gets to them and affects their relationships with other members of the group" (SYAP Interview), and where "sometimes you can empower them so much that they start disempowering other people" (SYAP Interview). The weight of new roles, responsibilities and perceptions of their own skills and abilities undoubtedly alters users' world view:

"People have a different view of themselves, and muscles they didn't know they had start to flex. ... It's a 50/50 chance whether they then take this new power and distort your lives with it. Some people just get a big head, they become confused. They confuse ... the power embodied in that role within themselves" (FCLD Interview).

Indeed Robson et al (1997) identified "a ruling network, or Mafia" of users and workers, whilst Jeffrey (1997) found a community elite of "hyper-activists" (p29). Second Chance Learning actively encouraged students to become managers to seek "the benefit of 'non activists' learning about committees and broadening community representation" (SCL Document⁵²). However maintaining the interest and commitment of these non-activist representatives was difficult.

Such examples suggest that participatory models have "confused the building of power with the building of structures" (Traynor 1992 p9 in Stoecker 1997a p11; also Baxter 1996). Whilst this research found that user representatives and managers brought specific knowledge, skills and accountability, gaps remained in support,

⁵² Hamilton, Edith and Paterson, Margaret (1993) Evaluation of Second Chance Learning.

training and effective representation. In particular the traditional committee appears "an inappropriate vehicle for participation" (Jeffrey 1997 p25), suggesting alternative mechanisms which spread power more broadly are preferable, such as market surveys, one-off local fora, member-community working groups, citizen's juries (Jeffrey 1997), informal meetings, planning groups and workshops (Wilcox 1994).

Conclusion

"... the kinds of solution which will satisfy the need for user feedback will differ fundamentally from those intended for power-sharing" (Jeffrey 1997 p30).

This chapter explores user involvement as a third, central method of empowerment, whilst emphasising that individual types of involvement are simply different rather than superior or inferior.

Seven types were identified and discussed here: getting involved, setting the empowerment agenda, implementation and service delivery (recognising users as experts and exploring a new role for workers), volunteering (acknowledging the question of payment), becoming paid workers, representation and management (addressing users' experiences as decision-makers and managers within top-down and bottom-up structures, and reviewing the concept of people power), and finally passive or non-involvement (related to a lack of ownership, virtual power and corrupt power).

This research demonstrates the need to consider types of involvement flexibly in empowerment practice and promote a range of options for users, rather than seeking any ideal type.

Part Four now explores another aspect of empowerment practice, analysing the role of three critical factors.

PART FOUR

**CRITICAL FACTORS
IN
EMPOWERMENT
PRACTICE**

4.0 INTRODUCTION

The fourth part of this thesis aims to identify the critical factors which essentially 'make or break' empowerment practice.

Chapter 4.1 identifies a number of preconditions for empowerment, or rather requirements which must be satisfied for empowerment to occur. In discussing those identified within the research, this chapter questions whether preconditions are necessary for any, or simply optimal, empowerment.

Chapter 4.2 discusses resources as bases of power for practice. Six resource issues are explored: money, the level and source of resources, and in turn indigenous, human and shared resources. This discussion suggests that issues around equality of, access to and control over resources are as critical as resource levels in practising empowerment.

Chapter 4.3 explores the effect of various blocks and barriers, suggesting these appear almost inherent in any empowerment practice, yet can become all-consuming at times. This discussion suggests that the impact of potential barriers can be reduced by early awareness and a strong dose of realism. However more commonly, potential challenges appear to be ignored for as long as possible, resulting in projects struggling to achieve their objectives.

4.1 PRECONDITIONS FOR EMPOWERMENT

Introduction

"Lots of different things need to be in place for empowerment to actually happen. So many things impinge on empowerment, ... so it's not an easy process" (EP Interview).

This chapter explores preconditions for empowerment, the first of three critical factors in empowerment practice discussed in Part Four. Preconditions are defined as requirements which must be satisfied or structures which must be in place for empowerment to occur, or "basic conditions [which] need to be met if community empowerment is to be achieved" (Strathclyde Region 1993 Topic Sheet 1).

Commentators were asked whether they believed any particular conditions had to be met for empowerment to occur, and if so what these were. Specific preconditions were identified, alongside discussions of broader issues of fulfilling preconditions, tensions within and between preconditions, and consequences of ignoring them. Once more it is participants' perceptions which are explored here, rather than any objective evaluative assessment of essential conditions for empowerment.

After addressing identification, this chapter reviews seven preconditions: meeting immediate presenting need; receptiveness to empowerment; starting where people are; a taste of power; empowering the empowerers; securing access; and establishing leadership, structures and organisation. Throughout it is questioned whether preconditions are necessary for any, or simply optimal, empowerment.

Identifying Preconditions

Preconditions for empowerment are commonly mentioned within the literature, as the selection outlined in Table 4 suggests. However although specific examples are given, the literature does not adequately explain how preconditions are differentiated as such. For example Beresford and Croft's (1993) "prerequisites" of access and support could equally be defined as resources if present, or as barriers if absent. This question of definition recurs throughout this chapter.

Table 4: Empowerment Theory and Preconditions for Empowerment

Author(s)	Terms Used to describe 'preconditions'	Preconditions for Empowerment
Beresford and Croft (1993)	"Prerequisites for empowerment"	Access and support.
Burridge (1991)	"Prerequisite skills"	Self motivation, personal autonomy and effectiveness.
Hoyes et al (1993)	"Prerequisites to empowerment"	An accessible structure which promotes information-sharing, support and advocacy, motivation, equal opportunities and good communication.
Preston-Shoot (1992)	"Prerequisite skills for empowerment"	Knowledge and skills to increase power, control and choice; access to advice and advocates; information and support.
Rogers (1978)	"Core conditions"	Establishment of a safe and genuine listening relationship.
Strathclyde Regional Council (1993 and undated)	"Basic conditions"; "Prerequisites for empowerment"	Trust and honesty, information, understanding of empowerment, community work skills, access to resources (including money, facilities and training), good communication and interpersonal skills, choice, and staff empowerment.
Taylor et al (1992)	"Prerequisites to power"; "Prerequisites to empowerment"	Access, information, publicity and outreach, clarity, support and advocacy, timing, results, commitment, structures and training.

Whilst the commentators' identification of preconditions reflected this literature in parts, not all agreed such preconditions were necessary for empowerment, whilst several believed preconditions existed but claimed there was "no tablet of stone" (SYAP Interview) on which these were outlined.

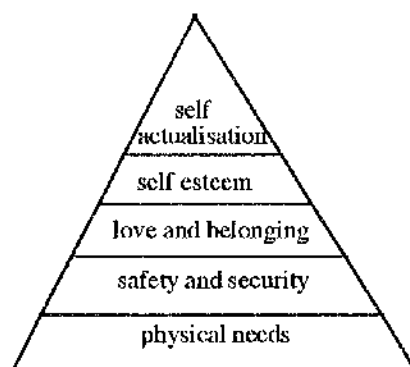
Meeting Immediate Presenting Need

"... the necessary preoccupation with the day-to-day problems of survival hardly encourage attention to broad community matters" (Brager 1963 p36).

Kieffer (1984) claims that "survival is, in itself, a full-time occupation" (p17), whilst Taylor et al (1992) add that individuals' ability to take power depends on how far their basic needs are met. This notion of empowerment practice as too luxurious or cerebral for those living in deprivation is supported by Hoyes et al's (1993) argument that "people [who] are struggling for day-to-day survival are unlikely to get involved in abstract decision-making processes" (p14). Stewart and Taylor (1995) consequently recommend that "people first be given basic levels and standards of service to meet basic needs. After this there are both individual and collective routes to power" (p19). Thus, in Maslowian style, empowerment is restricted to those whose basic needs have been fulfilled.

Whilst the concept of need is as contested as empowerment, brief theoretical definitions are useful here. Just as many conceptualisations of involvement are rooted in Arnstein's (1969) Ladder of Citizen Participation, analyses of need appear heavily dependent on Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs, reproduced in Figure 6. Through his bottom-up pyramid of needs, Maslow suggests each need must be satisfied before the next level is sought. Thus individuals only express needs for self actualisation once all other levels are met.

Figure 6: Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs
(in Dementia Services Development Centre 1994 p11).



The Dementia Services Development Centre (1994) suggests that basic needs reach beyond physical survival, ranging from physical or biological needs such as food, shelter, rest and movement; to psychological and social needs for life, belonging, security and self-worth; and spiritual needs such as hope and meaning in life. Herd (1995a) similarly outlines a broad set of seven human needs: social interaction, dignity and autonomy alongside legally binding civil rights, somewhere to live, economic security, belonging and engaging with others, fulfilment, and finally the more open-ended "we need what we need" (p26). In their influential Theory of Human Need, Doyal and Gough (1991) claim Maslow's model is overly simplistic and confuses drives and needs, arguing that basic needs for autonomy and survival must be supplemented by intermediate needs for food and water, housing, work, a non-hazardous environment, health care, childhood needs, support groups, economic security, physical security, education, and safe birth control and childbearing.

The commentators agreed that where individuals were struggling to exist through poverty, health difficulties, or personal and family problems, empowerment was particularly challenging. They argued that participants "need to be a wee bit beyond acute personal deprivation" (FCLD Interview), and projects must avoid "the

artificiality of separating physical, social and emotional needs" (DCHP Document¹). Unmet basic needs offer one explanation for some projects' failure to attract the expected levels of involvement, as whilst projects were commonly created in response to significant user needs, these very needs in themselves appeared to block participation.² When there's "so much junk heaped upon people" only when they "get their daily happenings sorted out, can they think of other things" (SCL Interview). As one project's annual report acknowledged:

"The Women and Health Project seeks to enable women who are coping on a day to day level with the effects of poverty, housing problems, single parenthood, unemployment and caring for elderly relatives to take more control over their health and other aspects of their lives. ... There is much evidence that because of the undeniably detrimental effect of these factors, some women do not spontaneously contact the project or initially show enthusiasm for the activities we promote" (SW&H Document³).

Yet this suggests a somewhat circular debate, illustrated by tensions within the Foundation for Community Leadership Development. FCLD's focus on personal and group effectiveness was criticised as an ill-afforded luxury by some observers, who claimed community activists had to prioritise survival. Yet FCLD argued that only more effective activists can "deal with the nitty gritty of meeting immediate presenting need in their community" (FCLD Interview):

"I think there may be an issue about us being a kind of middle class parachuting organisation. You know, 'Don't you realise that people have more pressing needs than self actualisation?!' That's not the words they put it in, but they've all read Maslow!" (FCLD Interview).

There are four further difficulties in classifying meeting immediate needs as a precondition for empowerment. First, much empowerment practice is targeted towards people living in deprivation. If empowerment cannot start until poverty is addressed, few initiatives would meet their empowerment objectives. Second, there are numerous examples of people, not least within the projects, who are financially, materially, or environmentally deprived, yet who become empowered 'against all odds':

There is a line of argument that would say all this 'touchy-feely' stuff ... is a luxury good to be concerned about once you've got the bread and the potatoes sorted out. There is no doubt that people who haven't got some measure of stability in their lives have difficulty sustaining or engaging with a personal development empowerment process, because they are just running on such slender margins that they can easily get knocked off track. So there is a relationship. But on the other hand one can think,

¹ Kennedy, Aine (1992) Local Voices, Local Lives: The Story of the Kendoon Community Health Profile.

² Passive and Non-Involvement were discussed in (3.3) Types of Involvement (7. Passive and Non-Involvement, pp157-162).

³ Stirling Women and Health Project Annual Report 1990-1.

through history, of people who have been in an incredibly disadvantaged position, who have overcome it through their will or their drive to be more than they are, ... people who have lived extraordinary lives within a circumstance which was incredibly prescribed" (FCLD Interview).

Third, many projects neither attempted, nor were powerful enough, to tackle wider economic and social inequalities.⁴ Yet if meeting immediate need is a precondition for empowerment, this focus should have been central. Fourth and finally, projects' circular or staged models of empowerment commonly ended with users moving on to educational, training or employment opportunities.⁵ Here their needs were met as a final outcome of project involvement, rather than addressed as an initial, conditional stage of the empowerment process.

In summary, unmet needs may be a barrier to empowerment, or meeting needs an initial step, rather than a precondition as such. Thus social needs may be simply a condition (rather than precondition) of empowerment (SCL Document⁶).

Receptiveness to Empowerment

"It's people's receptiveness to empowerment - some people don't want it. ... Particularly I think when we're working with elderly people we don't push it down their throats. ... That's not empowerment, that's autocratic" (EP Interview).

Clutterbuck (1995) warns that empowerment is impossible "unless people want to be empowered" (in Newmark 1995 p4), whilst Croft and Beresford (1990) claim that "pressurising people to be involved is as disempowering as preventing their participation" (p21). Not all clients desire empowerment (Gibson 1991), and "It would be simplistic to suggest ... that the remaining population will jump at the chance of empowerment" (Dyer 1994 p31).

This research identified receptiveness to empowerment, or "feeling you want it to happen" (SW&H Interview), as a critical precondition, with projects acting as an "external legitimising force" (LCDP Interview) for those already motivated towards change but requiring support and assistance.

⁴ As discussed in (3.1) Focusing Empowerment (Focusing on Wider Society, pp118-20).

⁵ These are discussed in (5.2) Steps and Stages in Empowerment (pp225-243).

⁶ McGlashan, Mary (1991) Learning in the Community: Second Chance: The First Four Years 1987-1991.

A lack of receptiveness conversely blocked empowerment work. For example, numerous Empowerment Project participants (particularly nursing staff) claimed the elderly patients were "sick of having to decide this, that and the next thing" (nurse in EP Fieldnotes), questioning their consumerist model of empowerment within an institutional setting where choices are inherently limited. This echoes Labonte's (1991) claim that "a complex listing of choice, a series of pros and cons to each choice, and a willingness to support the person in whatever choice he makes" (p32) can overwhelm and confuse, rather than empower:

"I think there's a time sometimes where elderly people reach that stage anyway, and I think that we can in fact cause utter confusion for them if we say, 'No! You will decide! It's your choice!' It's quite a hard balance to strike" (EP Interview).

Other projects found that users' receptiveness could be increased by ensuring they played a leading role in defining empowerment. For example Drumchapel Community Health Project commentators encouraged their volunteers to develop a "health agenda", which eventually listed 110 local issues and concerns (DCHP Document⁷). Other projects' commentators identified the need to create a sense of trust and safety with users and volunteers.

Yet questions remain around how far project workers and users share perceptions about empowerment-related change and its benefits (Duncan and Cribb 1996). Indeed users' lack of receptiveness may demonstrate a reaction against attempts to change their opinions or behaviour, whereby no empowerment is considered preferable to empowerment on someone else's terms:

"I have heard 'empowerment' as the latest thing professionals 'do' to disabled people - we used to be 'rehabilitated', now we are 'empowered'. We should recognise that users are interested in taking power, not just having it handed to them" (Vasey in Knight 1994 p11).

Again the characteristics of a precondition come into question here. Receptiveness to empowerment may simply bring a higher level of empowerment than indifference or resistance, rather than creating an either/ or situation where no receptiveness guarantees no empowerment.

⁷ Drumchapel Community Health Project (1991) Concrete Action: A Report into Child Accidents in Play Areas in Drumchapel.

Starting Where People Are

"I think that a person has to make the decision to do something for themselves ... for real empowerment. ... What you want to impose on someone else won't work in a true empowering sense" (DCHP Interview).

The Freirian notion of 'starting where people are' is widely identified as a precondition for empowerment (Baxter 1996). Here immediate interests and concerns are addressed, following Alinsky's (1972) recommendation to "Never go outside the experience of your people" (p127). To "start where the people are" quickly highlights personal and community concerns (Stoecker 1997b p39), so that users' own needs and concerns form the basis of political and social consciousness (Kirkwood and Kirkwood 1996; Mathis and Richan 1986). Empowerment work subsequently "thickens and politicises the pre-existing social ties and networks that the poor have already established for themselves to make their poverty bearable" (MacLeod undated p3).

Stirling Women and Health Project sought to "start where women are" (SW&H Document⁸) by setting up self-help groups only in response to the expressed needs and interests of women approaching the project, rather than following staff specialisms or preferences. Similarly Second Chance Learning claimed "Learning is grown from people's experiences" (SCL Document⁹), and encouraged students to identify their own learning needs and preferred teaching methods (SCL Document¹⁰). Stirling Youth Action Project used streetwork "to get out there and meet them on the street, and hear what they're saying, and ask them why they're hanging out there" (SYAP Interview):

"You've got to start where young people are at, I think, ... you know, trying to make sure young people don't drop off the edge of the world. ... The starting point's got to be young people's experience, you know, and going into their territory on their terms" (SYAP Interview).

Indeed if "people learn best through engaging with their own experience" (FCLD Document¹¹), this approach attracts and maintains participation by appealing to individual self-interest and offering immediate and concrete results (Sanders 1965 in Gelb and Sardell 1974). Kieffer (1984) claims individuals only respond to "mobilizing incidents" or "episodes" which directly threaten their self-interest. Projects which do not recognise or respond to such concerns thus risk poor participation. This research

⁸ Stirling Women and Health Project Notes on Review Day 31/5/93.

⁹ Second Chance Learning (1993) Fact Sheet.

¹⁰ Hamilton, Edith and Paterson, Margaret (1993) Evaluation of Second Chance Learning.

¹¹ Foundation for Community Leadership Development (1991) Course Brochure Autumn '91.

confirmed that users largely become involved for personal reasons, from the practical (such as seeking information, services or support) to the more psychological (such as seeking emotional support or self worth). Drumchapel Community Health Project aimed to "involve local people in ... issues which they identify in their own lives" (DCHP Document¹²) for this very reason:

"There's a kind of assumption that people want to join groups and make their community better. There's a big thing missing here. ... There needs to be a step back ... from this sort of jumping into action and changing the world. ... A lot of people that we've dealt with in the project ... have wanted to look for solutions for themselves. There are very few people who come and say, 'I want to make this community better' from the very beginning. There have been some, but others have come in and said, 'I want to do something for myself'." (DCHP Interview).

However the question arises here of starting where which people are? Barr (1995b) warns against empowerment work responding to locally expressed needs above broader political issues, claiming communities' demands can be as inequitable as powerholders':

"Since populist responses may be reactionary and hence reinforce injustice, empowerment practice requires more than simplistic homage to community populism" (p7).

Starting where people are may therefore be a necessary precondition for direction and involvement, however this risks overlooking wider interests. Several projects (including the SAMH Group, Lothian Coalition of Disabled People and Drumchapel Community Health Project) overcame this difficulty by supporting both collective empowerment work and enabling individual participants to pursue their own interests.

A Taste of Power

"Anybody can be empowered at any stage in their lives. What needs to happen though is that people need to have enough control over what's happened to take it a stage further" (DCHP Interview).

Empowerment practice is clearly targeted towards people who are powerless, however there is much evidence to suggest that promoting empowerment amongst those with no experience of power is extremely difficult. Berry (in Miller and Bryant 1990) claims that powerless people do not have enough energy to participate, whilst those with some power can at least build on this.

¹² Drumchapel Community Health Project (1992) Press Release for the official launch of Drumming Up Health (the post-pilot stage of the project) 18/11/92.

This tension was evident within the Empowerment Project, whose users (the patients) had little power over most areas of daily living. In addition to this institutional powerlessness, almost all were physically dependent on nurses for mobility and personal care. The project's arrival illustrated this powerlessness, with patients having no choice as to its sole focus on their ward and no subsequent opportunity to question its purpose or ask for its removal. Barnes and Walker (1996) describe such frail older people as "those with 'quiet voices'" (p376), highlighting the lack of evidence of their active participation compared to other user groups. Commentators claimed that empowerment was incredibly difficult, if not impossible, to progress with such "very disempowered people" in this disempowering setting. Ultimately this project found itself unable to develop methods of empowerment which would give patients a lead role, even though their aims were far from radical:

"It's so basic. ... We're starting at the very bottom here. It's, 'I don't want sugar in my tea'. It's not about the older people having power and control in this institution. ... It's about being listened to, it's about being treated with dignity and respect" (EP Interview)

Other projects¹ also suggested that empowerment depended on earlier experiences of power, which once tasted would be sought again. Thus one must have "a sense of the possibilities of being heard" (Barnes and Walker 1996 p382). A unique insight was provided by commentators from the Lothian Coalition of Disabled People, who compared the involvement of members who were born disabled with those becoming disabled later in life. One commentator, who became disabled as an adult, claimed it was this sudden onset of powerlessness which pushed him towards the disability movement and a search for empowerment, as his prior experience of holding (if not fully using) power was so strongly missed:

"When I was able-bodied ... if some things didn't suit me I'd go and ask about it, and say I wasn't happy with that, and just do it in a quiet way. If that didn't work out, I just used to walk off from it and go and do something else. ... Well nowadays, I can't walk away. I'm in a corner. I've got to fight my battles, it's something that I never did before. So I've been empowered in that way. I've had to be" (LCDP Interview).

Preston-Shoot (1992) claims however that a recognition of power imbalances is a more critical precondition than a sense of power (also MIND 1990, Simon 1990).¹³

Again however questions remain about classifying this as a precondition for empowerment. Is developing a taste of power not simply a part of empowerment, rather than a necessary precursor? The commentators were adamant however that the process of empowerment was almost impossible to kick off where project users were

¹³ This theme is discussed in detail in (4.3) Blocks and Barriers in Empowerment (False Empowerment: Tokenism and Low Expectations, Some Are More Equal Than Others, pp209-11).

powerless, "passive victims" (FCLD Interview). Heginbotham (1992) usefully suggests only "wider empowerment" is unattainable without the "full responsibility" of users (p12), suggesting a lesser level of empowerment can be reached regardless.

Empowering the Empowerers

"Staff who are controlled will tend to control others. Staff who are empowered will tend to be empowering to others" (Ahlquist 1997 p6).

This precondition suggests a person needs to be empowered themselves before they can in turn empower someone else. Whilst this is illustrated by the SAMH Advocacy and Empowerment Group's focus on training people with mental health problems as a precondition to training others, this precondition is most commonly discussed in relation to worker empowerment. For example Heginbotham (1992) claims user empowerment often fails where staff "are themselves disempowered in the hierarchies in which they belong" (p12), whilst Preston-Shoot (1992) suggests "for practitioners to ... be experienced as empowering, they must themselves feel empowered" (p17). Thus "client empowerment and organizational empowerment, simple logic suggests, depends upon worker empowerment" (Simon 1994 p10; also Baistow 1994; Strathclyde Region 1993).

Such arguments informed the Foundation for Community Leadership Development's decision to target training on community workers, as well as activists. Similarly the Empowerment Project viewed the nursing staff as critical for patient and relative empowerment, because they had proportionately greater power:

"Staff were the key. ... It's back to the power thing. Who has power on the ward? The patient doesn't have the power, the relative doesn't have the power. Who has the power over you? I mean at the most crudest level, who decides whether you go to the toilet or not? It's actually the staff" (EP Interview).

However in this project, these potential empowerers appeared unable or unwilling to be empowered themselves, suggesting that it is not only project users who have to be receptive to empowerment (echoing earlier discussions). Poor morale, the absence of any structure to take issues forward, a lack of resources (particularly time and staffing), and a resistance to change meant that nurses' relative powerfulness was offset by an institutional culture and personal belief systems which deterred empowerment. Read and Wallcraft (1992) relate such a lack of engagement to management pressure, a lack of training and back-up, and staff feeling threatened or undermined, concluding "It is not easy to empower or value others when you do not

feel powerful or valued yourself" (p5). Whilst the Empowerment Project's experience supports this, Read and Wallcraft's subsequent prediction that difficulties with resourcing, staffing, management and support should push empowerers towards stronger partnerships with users was not confirmed. Cynics suggested the ward staff wanted to be the empowered rather than the empowerers, and indeed this highlights an inherent irony whereby only managers or other powerholders control when, with whom and whether empowerment will occur (Baistow 1994).

Securing Access

"... success depends on ... a decision-making structure that allows access; information and advocacy; the incentives to engage with the process; and equity in being heard" (Hoyes et al 1993 p14).

Hoyes et al (1993) cite "real access" (p14) at physical, psychological and financial levels as a "prerequisite to empowerment". The commentators also identified access to information, physical and local access, and access to power as critical for empowerment.

First, access to information was considered "essential" as "you can't be empowered if you don't have information" (LCDP Interview), supporting Hoyes et al's (1993) identification of a prerequisite of clear, accurate, accessible and up-to-date information in varied formats. This was a central aim of several projects, with Drumchapel Community Health Project and Stirling Women and Health Project both creating user/ community libraries, and the Empowerment Project developing information packs for staff detailing community services and empowerment literature. The Lothian Coalition of Disabled People noted such a heavy demand for disability-related information that they secured funding for a sister project, the Grapevine Information Service. Notably getting the right information in the right way was identified as critical, with users crying out for "No more leaflets!" (DCHP Document¹⁴).

Second, creating physically and locally accessible projects was identified as a precondition. Second Chance Learning found that early expectations of high student numbers were blocked by their initial location in local primary schools, of which many of their target group were wary. Securing an accessible and independent

¹⁴ McGhee, Sarah; McEwen, J; Kennedy, Aine and Craig, Pauline (1991) Drumchapel Healthy Cities Project: Report on the First Year Evaluation August 1991.

community centre base, with a built-in crèche for students' children, increased student numbers, illustrating how "social needs had to be met before the project could advance to its educational objectives" (SCL Document¹⁵). More fundamentally, commentators from the Lothian Coalition of Disabled People argued that basic physical access was essential for empowerment, as "it's very difficult to empower people if they can't get anywhere, ... if you can't get into a building" (LCDP Interview). This was a central focus of campaigning work, or as one member claimed "We are not looking for blind bus drivers but we do want the same civil rights other people enjoy" (LCDP Document¹⁶).

Third, and finally here, commentators identified access to power as a precondition for empowerment, in particular access to influential powerholders. For example, Lothian Coalition of Disabled People influenced policy-making through their access to powerholders within local government joint planning committees, whilst Stirling Youth Action Project's young people accessed resources such as accommodation and finance through meeting policy-makers and politicians individually and collectively in forums and partnership groups (SYAP Document¹⁷). "Knowing the system" (LCDP Interview) in this way not only maintained projects politically and financially, but also helped change the system by challenging powerholders' views:

"There needs to be a way into the policy-makers. I think that's the biggest thing. There needs to be a sensitivity of funding towards the issues that are around empowerment. Like if the health promotion department want to set up projects like ours around empowerment, then what they would do is say 'In a year's time you will have empowered ten people.' That's completely unrealistic, and very insensitive to actually what the issues are" (DCHP Interview).

Establishing Leadership, Structure and Organisation

"If you haven't got a good structure that people understand, especially the workers, and a good team that are all striving, looking at the same kind of vision, then it just doesn't work" (SW&H Interview).

Preconditions for empowerment were not only identified in relation to individuals, with effective leadership, structure and organisation also seen as essential for projects to achieve their empowerment objectives. This is perhaps a surprising finding, given

¹⁵ McGlashan, Mary (1991) Learning in the Community - Second Chance: the first 4 years 1987-1991.

¹⁶ Dougie Herd, Co-ordinator of Lothian Coalition of Disabled People, quoted in The Evening News 7/7/94).

¹⁷ Stirling Youth Action Project (1993) Annual Review '93 - a positive approach to young people.

empowerment's image as "touchy feely", "vague" (SAMH Interview), "fuzzy" (FCLD Interview) and generally unclear and mystifying.¹⁸

However within the literature there is ample recognition of the dangers of poor organisation or unclear structures for empowerment. Whilst the voluntary and community sectors tend to see organisation and structure negatively, and hierarchical leadership as contrary to collective goals and values, writers warn against the "tyranny of structurelessness" (Freeman 1972 in Gruber and Trickett 1987) and "myth of structurelessness" whereby the exercise of power becomes masked (Freeman 1974 p207 in Nagel 1987 p76), alternatively claiming structure and organisation help sustain commitment and energy (Nagel 1987). Riger (1984) claims that hierarchy and leadership should not be seen as inherently oppressive, whilst Mills (1992) adds that "there is no such thing as a non-hierarchical organisation" (p32), stressing that finding the appropriate degree of hierarchy is critical.

Whilst some commentators complained that dominant leadership prevented other participants initiating work, and slowed progress as decisions were continually checked out, others complained that strong leadership and hierarchical organisation were critical for strategic guidance and clear divisions of responsibility. As one new leader explained at the end of a long period of shifting and unclear leadership, their renewed progress "hasn't been necessarily because of my particular qualities or anything as a leader. It's because there has been one" (DCHP Interview). Others agreed:

"Without leadership the organisation has no focus, no direction. ... I think certainly in voluntary organisations you have to have strong leadership from your management committee and ... you have to have leadership and a recognised hierarchy within the staff team. But ... those exercising the power have to do their best to empower other members of staff. ... The secret of power is to spread that power around" (LCDP Interview).

Commentators generally preferred their less bureaucratic and hierarchical structures to their experience of larger statutory organisations, for example claiming this enabled a greater voicing of issues and more effective communication than formal structures. Thus a project could be "immensely unstructured", but remain "very effective" (DCHP Interview). Yet some blamed a lack of organisation and structure for creating fragmentation and poor direction, with participants "all working as individuals" (SAMH Interview), and finding "It's been really hard to keep hold of things - it's difficult to get organised to do anything" (EP Interview). However rather than calling for top-down, management-heavy structures, they claimed empowerment depended

¹⁸ As discussed in (3.2) The Language of Empowerment ("Tainted with Jargon!", pp129-131).

on "not the big powerful structure, but a very enabling kind of supportive structure that recognises the potential in everybody" (SW&H Interview).

Projects consequently sought participative and open structures, recognising that "empowerment is hard to do in the context of rigid hierarchies" (EP Document¹⁹), and "the structure has to be flexible enough to enable folk to be themselves and not be clones, because we are all different" (SW&H Interview). Stirling Women and Health Project claimed to have established "the right environment to encourage women to take control" by being open, responsive, respecting individual feelings, and creating opportunities for feedback (SW&H Document²⁰), whilst Drumchapel Community Health Project cited "being made welcome" and "feeling comfortable in the project office" as two "important pre-requisites for empowered participation", partly because these encourage ongoing volunteer involvement (DCHP Document²¹). Offering "the right reception" (SCL Interview) via an informal and welcoming atmosphere was seen as critical, as if individuals do feel unable to approach projects, empowerment objectives are irrelevant:

"I think if they come in here for the first time and they get a bad reception, if they're feeling so underconfident, they'll not come back. So regardless of who comes in through the door, whether you're a professional or just a wee guy off the street, you're treated with the same courtesy" (SCL Interview).

A level of formality was however seen as necessary at times. For example the SAMH Advocacy and Empowerment Group chose a formal meeting room for their training sessions, claiming this better reflected their aim of skills development and attracted status within the wider organisation (SAMH Document²²).

Finally here, projects found that effective structures and organisation facilitated the styles of communication necessary for empowerment. Structured communication was essential "to tell everybody what we're doing, with no hidden agendas" (SYAP Interview). For example, the Lothian Coalition of Disabled People found that only strong, clear feedback structures and mechanisms ensured members remained informed of management decisions. Similarly the Empowerment Project found informal, unscheduled ward visits resulted in little concrete progress, with a lack of structured work also reinforcing the tendency towards personal blame and stereotyping when things went wrong (EP Fieldnotes). In addition a lack of early,

¹⁹ The Empowerment Project Comments on the Final Report.

²⁰ Jones, Jane (1992) Stirling Women and Health Project Evaluation.

²¹ Kennedy, Aine; Tannahill, Carol and Curtice, Lisa (1993) Evaluating 'Health for All' Practice at Community Level: The Drumchapel Healthy Cities Project.

²² Tait, Sue (1994) SAMH Advocacy and Empowerment Training Group: Evaluation, February 1994.

structured negotiation and discussion between key participants created a continually disputed agenda and confused aims. They consequently agreed that:

"Before entering into an empowerment process everyone involved, especially those for who the greatest change might be implied, should have the opportunity to discuss the process fully and identify their concerns" (EP Document²³).

Conclusion

Here seven preconditions for empowerment have been explored as critical factors in empowerment practice: meeting immediate presenting need; receptiveness to empowerment; starting where people are; a taste of power; empowering the empowerers; securing access; and establishing leadership, structures and organisation.

Whilst writers and commentators appear to find the notion of preconditions useful, a number of key tensions and contradictions remain. In particular it remains unclear what uniquely characterises preconditions for empowerment. Some preconditions appear to be more resources for empowerment (such as effective leadership, structures and organisation) or steps and stages in the process (such as having a sense of power).

Perhaps it is misleading to classify preconditions as conditions which have to be met for empowerment to begin, as many examples exist of people who, despite preconditions being unfulfilled, are in the process of being empowered or have been empowered. More accurately, preconditions may be conditions which have to be met for maximum or optimal empowerment, rather than any empowerment at all. The right conditions thus facilitate, rather than guarantee, empowerment.

The second of the three critical factors explored in Part Four is now explored in the form of resources, or bases of power.

²³ Letter sent between Empowerment Project managers.

4.2 BASES OF POWER: RESOURCES FOR EMPOWERMENT

Introduction

This second chapter in Part Four identifies and explores resources which assist empowerment, identifying examples of each and more critically exploring their interaction with practice.

Discussions around resources (and barriers discussed in the next chapter) covered considerably wider ground than is reflected here. Notably, many issues raised are no more pertinent to empowerment-based projects than any small, voluntary/ community sector or 'alternative' initiative. This chapter is necessarily limited to those resource issues which impact upon empowerment practice.

Six such critical issues are explored here: financial empowerment, the level of resources, the source of resources (including access and control), and in turn indigenous, human and shared resources.

Identifying Resources

"Fundamentally, I don't think you can have empowerment without resources. ... I think the two are totally connected and mutually need each other" (EP Interview).

Wrong (1979) describes resources as "bases of power", whilst Mathis and Richan's (1986) claim that "... power in society is based in large measure on control over resources" (p5). Resource issues are prominent within discussions of empowerment, with Gibson (1991) defining the concept as "enhancing people's abilities to ... mobilise the necessary resources in order to feel in control of their own lives (p359), and Hasenfeld (1987) claiming it is "a process through which clients obtain resources - personal, organisational, and community" (pp478-9 in Simon 1994 pxiv).

Table 5 summarises the diverse resources identified in the literature. Whilst helpful this far, writers commonly focus on identification at the expense of exploring resource issues. Critically, resourcing empowerment means more than providing financial support, therefore this research asked commentators to broadly identify resources their projects used, before discussing specific resources listed on a prompt

card.¹ This consequently addressed both the range of resources and associated issues pertinent to empowerment, supporting claims that issues (such as access, barriers, flexibility and responsiveness) are as important as specific resources (Association for Directors of Social Work 1995).

Table 5: Empowerment Theory and Resources for Empowerment

Author(s)	Term Used to describe 'resources'	Resources for Empowerment
Dahl (in Dubey 1970 p78)	Bases of influence	Money/ credit, control over jobs and information, knowledge, electoral rights, ethnic solidarity, social status, popularity, legality/ officiality.
Etzioni (1968 in Wrong 1979)	Assets	Coercive (for force), utilitarian (for material reward), normative assets (for legitimacy or prestige).
Friedmann (1992)	Bases of social power	Time, knowledge and skills, information, money, organisation, social networks.
Gamson (1968 in Wrong 1979)	Power resources	Constraint, inducement, persuasion resources.
Gibson (1996)	Sources of power	Know-how, discipline, authority, other people's loyalty, solidarity.
McConnell (1996)	Resources for power	Knowledge, wealth, good contacts.
Mondros and Wilson (1994)	Resource types	People, timing & sequence, environmental resources (e.g social, political & economic environment), organisational resources (e.g money, staff), drama and creativity.
Rossi (in Dubey 1970 p78)	Sources of power	Wealth, threats to property, control over values and prestigious interactions, support of interest groups.
Wilcox (1994)	Resources	Information, money, confidence, skills.
Wrong (1979)	Bases of power	Time, money, knowledge, unity, solidarity, organisation.

Financial Empowerment

"The Government do everything else but care,
As long as they get their money,
They get their share,
Come on, help us get some money today!" (SYAP Interview²)

Empowerment and adequate financial resourcing are arguably closely interlinked (Colenutt and Cutten 1994; Knight 1994), with claims that "the government's starting to see that there's savings to be made in empowerment" (LCDP Interview), and conversely that "you can't really make things happen without money" (SYAP Interview). This concept of "financial empowerment" was identified by the Lothian

¹ This card is illustrated in Appendix Two: Example of an Interview Schedule (pp313-19).

² Lyrics sung to the tune of 'The Locomotion', written by members of Cultenhove Youth Strikes Back (SYAP Interview).

Coalition of Disabled People (LCDP Interview), who postponed their official launch until a funding base was secured:

"We decided that the model we wanted was to have funding that we could control, and that the organisation could control in policy terms how that funding was actually utilised. So there was that element of empowerment as well which was very clear in the early days" (LCDP Interview).

However, other projects complained of inadequate core budgets, too few funding sources and the need to "spend all your time chasing money instead of doing things" (in SW&H Fieldnotes). User groups suffered from particularly poor financial support, such as the SAMH Advocacy and Empowerment Group who found no further funding beyond their one year. These trainees claimed their parent organisation (the Scottish Association for Mental Health) should "put their money where their mouth is" (SAMH Interview) and fund empowerment practice. As their final evaluation concluded:

"The main barrier was the limited level and duration of funding. ... There was a sense of frustration at having reached the point of being able to apply what had been learned, but of being denied access to opportunities to do so" (SAMH Document³).

Other users were more fortunate, such as Second Chance Learning's students who secured local authority funding, to meet their original aim that "local people would be empowered by going for the local grant. It would be their money" (SCL Interview).

"Postcode Politics": The Urban Programme⁴

Much discussion on money and empowerment focused on the intricacies of urban programme funding, upon which (despite the tendency to use 'cocktails' of public, private and charitable funding overall) almost all projects depended for core budgets. Here central government (the Scottish Office) fund 75% of project costs, with local authorities providing the remaining 25%.

For some the urban programme brought a relatively long term, "healthy grant" (FCLD Interview) of up to seven years.⁵ However there were also accusations that this funding was "too tight" (SW&H Interview), amounting to "peanuts" (SYAP Interview) and failing to recognise the real costs of offices, training, staffing, and

³ McCollam, Allyson (1994) SAMH Advocacy Training Group: Evaluation of the Group August '93 - February '94.

⁴ Alcock et al (1996 p49), discussed below.

⁵ Usually four years in the first instance, with a three year extension period conditional on a positive evaluation.

childcare and other support for users and volunteers. Although always competitively distributed, central government cutbacks, shrinking local government finance, and the redrawing of eligible areas' geographical boundaries has intensified an already rivalrous situation between projects and communities for this smaller pot of money.

The restriction of urban programme funding eligibility to designated geographical areas of priority treatment has arguably produced "important multiplier effects in raising service levels and community development" (Alcock et al 1996 p49), directing resources towards the "grassroots" who are more often excluded through low incomes (FCLD Document⁶). However this approach necessarily excludes areas, contradicting broader "commitments to empowerment and citizenship for all", and encouraging "post-code politics" whereby local politicians compete for the funding recognition which effectively worsens areas' negative images (Alcock et al 1996 p49). This research confirmed that geographical targeting causes some difficulties, for example where "the fact that the project was to cover four distinct areas" (SYAP Interview) spread Stirling Youth Action Project's single worker too thinly. However in practice projects offered greater flexibility, targeting their work on designated areas without wholly excluding others:

"If somebody knocks the door and says: 'I don't live in the urban areas but I've got a problem', we would say: 'Just you come in and we'll sort it out. We'll chat to you'. ... It's all very well the Scottish Office saying, 'Your funding is for these four areas', but they've obviously never been in the position where they've had a problem and had nobody to talk to, no matter where they come from" (SW&H Interview).

Money Isn't Everything ... Is It?

Further debate focused on whether money is the critical factor in empowerment practice, with the literature suggesting finance is necessary but not sufficient for success. Strathclyde Regional Council's Social Strategy (1992) states that communities need assistance in developing knowledge, skills and leadership as much as financial assets, whilst Castlemilk Umbrella Group⁷ (1988; 1989) claim that tackling local powerlessness and helplessness is as important as offering money, or

⁶ Foundation for Community Leadership Development (1989) Urban Aid Funding Application for Lothian Community Leadership Fund.

⁷ A large coalition of community organisations based in Castlemilk, a peripheral Glasgow housing scheme. The Group became the official community partner in the Scottish Office-led Castlemilk Partnership.

rather "empowerment of people in Castlemilk is as essential as economic development in achieving 'new life'." ⁸ (1989 no page no.).

Whilst this research identified a general frustration at the lack of money available, some commentators claimed that adequate financial resourcing did not help achieve empowerment objectives which depended on factors such as openness, strong interpersonal relationships and clear communication. Non-monetary resources, such as "the friendly atmosphere" or "the good will of the people" (SCL Interview) were identified as equally critical.

The Level of Resources

"To invite community initiatives without the means to support them is an exercise in frustration" (Marris and Rein 1972 p21).

The importance of resource levels is widely discussed within the literature. Barnes and Walker (1996) warn that "empowerment is not an alternative to adequate resourcing of services" (p385), whilst others note its common perception as an alternative response to limited and shrinking resources (Kernaghan 1992; Servian 1996). The projects enjoyed more generous and formal resourcing than many community initiatives, such as the tenants' associations studied by Clapham (1992), of whom three quarters had no office premises, and one third had an annual income below £50 and no meeting room.

However it was no surprise to learn that most participants believed their projects were poorly resourced, with the main complaint being unrealistic expectations given levels of money and staff, and "the lack of understanding of the timescale in terms of empowerment" (SYAP Interview). One commentator claimed her project was "set up to fail a lot of its objectives because of its resourcing" (SYAP Interview), whilst another recalled, "I very quickly realised that I didn't have the resources, which makes a nonsense of the whole thing" (SAMH Interview). Such views support accusations in the literature that powerholders use poor resourcing to ensure empowerment initiatives fail and thus justify continued individualism, victim-blaming and social control (Rees 1991; Stoecker 1997a).

⁸ This is a reference to the Scottish Office's (1988) 'New Life for Urban Scotland' proposals, which announced four Scottish urban regeneration partnerships in Castlemilk, Ferguslie Park (Paisley), Whitfield (Dundee) and Wester Hailes (Edinburgh).

Commentators' complaints that poor resourcing restricted them to reactive, "little compartments of work" (EP Interview) echoed Stoecker's (1997a) finding that under-resourced community organisations tend to "take on more than they can handle" (p6). More than one project became "largely a victim of its own success" (DCHP Interview) by continuing to develop new initiatives without matching in resources: "It's about what's possible and what's practical with the resources we've got. ... That struck me quite clearly, that we were working way beyond our resources. The resources did not match what was actually physically being done" (SW&H Interview).

Caught Short: A Lack of Time

A lack of time was repeatedly identified as limiting empowerment practice. All projects faced time-limited funding (from one year onwards⁹), with funders clearly ignoring Kearney and Keenan's (1988) warning that resourcing empowerment-based projects for only two to three years "will not work" (p5), and Kieffer's (1984) recommendation of at least four years:

"It is completely unrealistic to presume that the cumulative effects of domination can be reversed in any other than a long term frame of reference. ... it would be frivolous to pretend that there can ever be developed a 'short course' in individual empowerment" (p27).

Given such recommendations, the empowerment objectives of the most time-limited projects - the SAMH Advocacy and Empowerment Group (one year) and the Empowerment Project (two years) - seem extremely unrealistic, in particular as accommodation and user groups also had to be accessed within this timeframe.¹⁰

The lack of "real quality time" persisted as a critical issue for the Empowerment Project. Nursing staff were unable to match the project workers' time commitment, remaining too busy with practical nursing tasks "to discuss the issues of empowerment" (EP Interview) or "to create the space for an environment which empowers individuals" (EP Document¹¹). Participants debated whether this reflected lack of commitment or inadequate NHS resourcing, with some questioning whether the project's promotion of empowerment was in fact reducing patient care:

"Empowerment I think takes time, and I'm not always convinced that on wards where you have highly dependent people without - despite what they say - adequate staffing levels, you can spend time chatting to someone for an hour to get them dressed, or whatever. ... You're asking people to do that probably at the expense of other staff who are having to

⁹ Each project's duration is listed in Appendix One: Project Summaries (pp300-12).

¹⁰ This preparatory work took five of the SAMH Group's twelve months and four of the Empowerment Project's twenty four months.

¹¹ The Empowerment Project (1993) Proposal for Staff Seminars.

go ten times quicker because you just happen to have this nice conversation" (EP Interview).

Use Your Imagination: Resource Creativity

Such debates were more widely identified, with some commentators arguing that complaints of poor resourcing aim to excuse a failure to actively seek empowerment.

Thus improved access to existing resources and greater creativity are more critical:

"The argument always seems to be like resources, which I think is a weak argument. I think if you've got the resources you use them in the most imaginative way. The biggest resource in the social action approach is a good worker ... who's got the ability to communicate and enthuse and motivate" (SYAP Interview).

This call for greater creativity and effectiveness within existing resources, rather than ever-increasing resource bases, is repeated elsewhere (Principal Community Education Officers' Group 1996). Higgins (1992) found that care professionals used resource issues as "a smoke screen", diverting interest from establishing and maintaining effective empowerment (in Heginbotham 1992 p16). Empowerment arguably comes from "an attitude of mind and approach to work. ... There is therefore no excuse for doing nothing" (Ahlquist 1997 p18).

Resource inequality, rather than shortage, is also identified as critical in empowerment, reflecting that "the distribution of resources outside the empowering structure is unequal" (Gruber and Trickett 1987):

"The poor are not able to deal with the community power structure on equal terms, ... due mainly to the lack of necessary resources ... associated with the lowest socio-economic status" (Dubey 1970 pp78-9).

However others claim that more critical than equality are honesty, trust and commitment between participants around resource issues (Wilcox 1994), including acknowledging unequal power resources (Simon 1990):

"I think it's dangerous saying to people, 'All you have to do is kick the arse of the councillor, and you'll get what you want'. That's not the case and that's not what empowerment's about. I think it's also important when you're working with individuals and community groups that you're also talking about the limitations and the restrictions that we all have to face. ... It's not just a question of being able to stand up and say you'll get what you want" (SW&H Interview).

The Source of Resources: Access and Control

"The young folk have access to anything that belongs to the project, and have total access to the resources that I've got, via support for the project" (SYAP Interview)

A third resource issue is the source of resources, including access and control. Rappaport (1981) claims empowerment is about people obtaining and controlling the resources affecting their lives, whilst Power (1987 in Stewart and Taylor 1995) highlights users' access and control as a key principle of effective participation. Clearly those who control the resources have the greatest power (Wilcox 1994).

The literature suggests that users in particular have justifiable concerns about flexibility, choice and control of resources (Kestenbaum 1992 in Means et al 1993), which are commonly held in inaccessible structures (Robson et al 1997), and distributed in favour of professionalised projects above user-led initiatives (Stoecker 1997a). Resources thus reach groups for service users more easily than groups of users (Croft and Beresford 1990). Heginbotham (1992) claims "real empowerment" depends on authorities handing over resource control to users, yet as the Castlemilk Umbrella Group (1989) found:

"There is an assumption in the Partnership that some 'really important' things have to be pushed on without being able to 'wait for the community to catch up'. But in fact the community is often waiting somewhere else, at a different place for resources that never arrive" (no page no., emphasis in original).

There are alternative examples of greater user control, such as the 1960's American Community Action Programmes which aimed to create local power bases of community-controlled resources (Dubey 1970). The UK's Community Development Projects (CDPs) had similar aims, whilst more recent initiatives such as the Drumchapel Community Organisations Council (COC) established community-owned resource bases, offering low income residents the same access to legal, design, architectural, printing and organisational resources as statutory bodies (McManus et al 1993).

Whilst some projects sought greater user control of resources, several commentators claimed this could just be a "noose around folk's necks" (SYAP Interview). Stirling Youth Action Project resisted young people's initial pressure for more worker-led youth clubs, encouraging them to access existing resources such as community buildings, politicians, local services and grants to create their own provision (SYAP

Document¹²). The project also offered open access to resources such as video and television equipment, computers, typewriters and telephones. Whilst staffing and budgetary resources remained firmly in the project's hands,¹³ supporting Simon's (1994) claim that professionals tend to maintain control over "critical resources" (p12), this project was determined that other resources would be equitably shared: "They've always been encouraged to play a major part. They've always been welcome to come in. Even like using the computer and typing up their own letters, which may sound very simple, in lots of places that wouldn't be accepted" (SYAP Interview).

Buying Compliance?

Debates around access and control of resources also centred on projects' ability and willingness to challenge their funders, questioning how far resources are conditional on users' compliance and support:

"If you're going to have something owned by the people that they're in control of, there's an anomaly there, because any money they get is going to be from somewhere else and it's going to have conditions" (FCLD Interview).

Reinelt (1994) agrees that voluntary organisations' reliance on state funding is "a mixed blessing" (p685), potentially offering stability and influence whilst restricting autonomy and political challenge. Initiatives thus tend to be pushed towards individualised service provision rather than political action (Reinelt 1994; Shragge 1993). Indeed Cairncross et al (1992 in Stewart and Taylor 1995) found more conflictual approaches were common in groups receiving no state funding. Alcock et al (1996) claim state funding for community development is inherently contradictory, as community organisations target funders whilst being "forced into line with local authorities' priorities through dependence upon grant-aid" (p4). This tension underpins Piven and Cloward's (1971) critical analysis of social control in the welfare rights movement, whereby community organisations are silenced and forced into "acceptable" (rather than radical) action through their reliance on external funding.

Within this research, commentators agreed that their heavy reliance on government resourcing and the "political patronage" of urban aid (FCLD Interview) dampened many potential criticisms. Thus "it's quite difficult for community groups that are getting funding, their sole source of funding, from the council to then turn round and criticise" (SW&H Interview). However the Lothian Coalition of Disabled People

¹² Stirling Youth Action Project (1991) Progress Report 19.12.91.

¹³ The issue of user management of such resources is discussed in greater detail in (3.3) Types of Involvement (6. Representation and Management, Who Wants People Power? pp155-7).

regularly challenged their local government funders' decisions. So why such confidence? This may be explained by their status as a campaigning and politicised organisation who were key players in local policy-making. Challenging the local authority is the job they are funded to do. In addition the Coalition enjoy a solid base of local support, including powerful defenders within local government, whilst their collective management protects paid staff (who are local authority secondees) by the members directing developments:

"We have tried to do the right thing in the right way at the right time. That can be difficult at times. It could be a bit 'dodgy' for instance, to tell a Council that funds your organisation that their policies are wrong. Just because it's been difficult though, we've not stopped telling them when we think that they have got it wrong" (LCDP Document¹⁴).

Overall, fear of funders' reactions to criticism may be perceived rather than real, yet it this still effectively silences dissent. Chaney (1997) claims empowerment necessitates a more courageous approach:

"... as we testify on behalf of the powerless, we must be prepared to occasionally bite the hand that feeds us. We must not be afraid to twist the tails of the powerful in order to ensure that they justify their power" (p10).

Developing Indigenous Resources

"We believe that disabled people have a uniquely real insight into disability and in a world in which people enjoy the right to work together, organise, represent and argue for their own interests, disabled people constitute their own best advocates" (LCDP Document¹⁵).

Breton (1989) calls for people who are poor and oppressed to be recognised as resources in themselves, rather than assuming dependence on workers' resources. McConnell (1996) claims that poor communities do have access to and control over varied, but non-monetary, resources such as "ideas, co-operative values and practical self-help" (p3). Similarly North (1996) highlights the "myth ... that the poor have few skills and resources" (p269), whilst Nozick (1993) differentiates between the resources of elite groups, such as money and status, and those of communities, such as identity, history, and asset-sharing.

This research confirmed a critical role for indigenous resources in empowerment practice, with projects depending on "harnessing the motivation, time and skills of

¹⁴ Lothian Coalition of Disabled People (1991) Annual Report.

¹⁵ Lothian Coalition of Disabled People (1987) Lothian Coalition of Disabled People: The Self Organisation of Disabled People in Lothian 6.8.87.

existing staff and residents in the area" (DCHP Document¹⁶) as well as external support. Indeed projects themselves became local resources, with local people, professionals and other organisations tapping into their specialist knowledge and free or subsidised facilities and services. Use by the better-resourced statutory service providers raised some complaints however that projects were acting as a free or low cost 'catch-all' for cases they were unable or unprepared to handle:

"I hope we would be able to say, 'OK, we'll do your job for you, but we'll do it at a cost. You'll have to pay for our services because we don't have any other form of funding'. ... We picked up the job that the health service wasn't doing in the first place, and now they want to lop even more onto us without coming up with the cash" (SW&H Interview).

Some projects struggled to utilize indigenous resources and reduce dependence on formal or external sources. For example the Empowerment Project aimed for nursing staff to make better use of existing ward and community resources, rather than constantly looking to the project for new resources. The project supported nurses to create a volunteer programme, build links with community organisations and services, and increase relatives' involvement. Developing such indigenous resources aimed to increase community integration, improve patients' quality of life and concretise the project's empowerment objective, yet nurses continued to mistakenly view the project as an easy route to resources:

"We felt it was important to show that there *were* resources and there were simple basic things that could improve the quality of life, rather than just abstract concepts of empowerment. ... [But] We were always pushed to, 'What resources can you get?', not addressing the implications of not having the resources the nurses felt were actually needed" (EP Interview).

Discussions around indigenous resources focused in particular on developing and tapping into users' own knowledge, skills and information, reflecting claims in the literature that "knowledge is empowering, to a degree" (Howe 1992 p40), that developing local skills reduces dependency and "empowers people" (Garkovich 1989 p201), and that "information is power" (Read and Wallcraft 1992 p20).

The projects demonstrated considerable support for Evans' (1992) claim that "empowerment requires respect for what people already know and can do" (p142), with participants claiming "we learned from each other" (SAMH Interview), that "the main source of information is people" (SCL Document¹⁷) and "if you've got the information it does give you power - it empowers you" (DCHP Interview). Second Chance Learning aimed to develop this "community aspect of information" by

¹⁶ Kennedy, Aine (undated) 'Health for all' - from principles to practice in Drunchapel.

¹⁷ Hamilton, Edith and Paterson, Margaret (1993) Evaluation of Second Chance Learning.

encouraging students to identify their own information needs and sources, aware of "the danger that people can become dependent and less powerful if they always have to rely on other people to provide them with information" (SCL Document¹⁸). Similarly Stirling Women and Health Project aimed "to stimulate, motivate and foster skills which promote health" (SW&H Document¹⁹) rather than continually offering professional advice, supporting Breton's (1989) claim that "We will not reduce competence to a set of abilities we experts teach the poor and oppressed, but we will recognise the competence which they already exercise to survive" (p17).

Yet whilst Dubey (1970) agrees local people can "bridge the gap between middle class personnel and the poor" (p79), some users were frustrated that their newly developed skills and expertise were not fully exploited. The SAMH Advocacy and Empowerment Group's one year of funding ended just as they completed their training, and consequently their aim of training others could not be achieved. Here the opportunity to promote users' skills as project resources and as an empowering process (Evans 1992) was missed.

Indigenous networks were also identified as a powerful resource, supporting Breton's (1989) emphasis on communities' natural support networks above agency-based, formal networks. Commentators argued strong user networks promoted projects' profiles, attracted new users and gathered information. As one worker claimed, Drumchapel Community Health Project's volunteers could "get users involved in the project, ... actually spread the word, ... [and] do things in a much more relevant way to Drumchapel than we could do" (DCHP Interview). Similarly a Second Chance Learning worker noted:

"Local people relate well to local folk. ... There's a great value in having this local knowledge, tuning in locally. She [local worker] has got a network system where the antennae go out like that and she can gather all of this. We wouldn't get that" (SCL Interview).

Human Resources: Critical Roles

"I think to have empowerment effectively operating, or for people even to get committed to it, I think they've got to have the resources to do it, and resources may imply extra personpower" (EP Interview).

¹⁸ Hamilton, Edith and Paterson, Margaret (1993) Evaluation of Second Chance Learning.

¹⁹ Stirling Women and Health Project (1993) Management Committee Minutes February 1993.

Where finances and time are limited, the strength of human resources is critical, although what "may turn out to be the largest resource input" is often overlooked in resource assessments (Baxter 1996 p16). Many commentators agreed "the biggest resource really is the people who are around the project" (LCDP Interview), with initiatives relying on "committed" people who would "go the extra mile" (FCLD Interview). Participants' energy was tapped to a "massive" extent (DCHP Interview), reflecting Willow's (1997) finding that high levels of commitment and energy characterise empowerment-based initiatives.

Human resources were also identified within specific roles that participants played, with six roles particularly critical in pushing forward projects' empowerment objectives. These roles were not discrete, and some individuals simultaneously played several roles.

First the visionary, commonly the project co-ordinator, which supports Simon's (1994) assertion that vision is the first element of leadership and Morrison and Stapleton's (1996) definition of leaders as "people with vision who understand and effectively use both power and empowerment" (p5). However visionaries were equally likely to be project founders, in some cases no longer actively involved but leaving behind driving goals. Some newcomers were also visionary, developing and concretising ideas formerly left "hanging around" (DCHP Interview):

"She is not working for today. She's putting a future together for the project. She's working to a future. ... She's given the project plans, something to work towards" (SW&H Interview)

Second the pioneer, often "unseen, unnoticed, and unrecognised" (Knight 1994 p12). Pioneers brought new approaches to working cultures and geographical areas, acting as "a catalyst" for new developments in both their own projects and mainstream services. Stirling Youth Action Project's director described herself as "a bit of a pioneer" (SYAP Interview), influencing mainstream community education workers by acting as "a catalyst for change in their attitudes" (SYAP Interview).

Third the natural leader, commonly a key charismatic individual credited with shaping projects. Natural leaders were high profile, 'sung' heroes who tended to take responsibility for "sexy", high publicity work rather than day-to-day administration, management or service provision (DCHP Interview). For example the third co-ordinator of Stirling Women and Health Project promoted a "new direction" (in SW&H Fieldnotes) following a turbulent project history of staff disquiet and unclear aims, arriving when "the project was crying out for somebody that was going to lead them somewhere" (SW&H Interview). However some natural leaders were criticised

for controlling developments without challenge, and lacking administrative or managerial interests or skills (Fieldnotes, Various), supporting Gittel's (1980) claim that charismatic leadership and tight administration do not mix, and that "diversified leadership and the sharing of roles" (pp44-5) may be more appropriate. Whilst participants commonly fear that projects will crumble if natural leaders leave, some projects reported such fears were unfounded.

Fourth the team player, whose apparent absence from the empowerment literature reflects a tendency to stay out of the limelight. Team players enable developments and assist relationship-building within projects. The second Drumchapel Community Health Project co-ordinator was credited with playing "singularly the most important role" in pulling the project together (DCHP Interview), whilst the SAMH Advocacy and Empowerment Group co-ordinator was praised for "bringing out a harmonious relationship within the group. There wasn't a competitiveness" (SAMH Interview).

Fifth the champion, identified by Willow (1997) as critical in participatory initiatives, with Robson et al (1997) finding user involvement initiatives floundered once champions left. The commentators supported Ahlquist's (1997) claim that empowerment practice needs a champion to develop and promote project identity and initiatives. Such champions' "enthusiastic" (SW&H Interview) approach encouraged participants to get involved and stay involved through their conviction that "It's a wonderful project! ... You really ought to get involved if you can!" (SW&H Interview).

Sixth and finally, the role model, often a current or former project user or volunteer whose achievements inspire others in similar circumstances to believe "if they can do it, we can do it" (SCL Interview). Several projects benefited from such "positive role models" (SYAP Interview) or "powerful role models" (FCLD Document²⁰), with the Lothian Coalition of Disabled People aiming for high achieving disabled people to inspire other, especially young, disabled people (LCDP Document²¹), in this way. One Second Chance Learning role model was described as "quite inspirational to people around her" (SCL Interview), as this student confirms:

"There was ones that went through [the project] and the staff here would say, 'Oh, so-and-so, she's doing a degree!' And I would really admire that and think, 'Maybe I could do that'" (SCL Interview).

20 Foundation for Community Leadership Development (1989) Lothian Community Leadership Fund Urban Aid Application.

21 Mohammadi, Jacqui (1993) Lothian Coalition of Disabled People Youth Strategy Project.

Shared Resources

Garkovich (1989) argues that collective resources, such as mobilisation, organisation and leadership, are essential for community development, whilst Wrong (1979) criticises power theorists' emphasis on individual resources, claiming pooled resources form a stronger, more effective power base.

This research identified a particularly strong role for networking which, like partnership, is a buzzword which everybody feels they should be practising but many are unsure how (Breton 1989). The current climate offers both incentives and disincentives to networking, with fiercer financial competition setting organisations against one another whilst shared difficulties encourage greater solidarity. On balance Taylor (1995) claims that:

"... it is likely that in a more fragmented 'postmodern' environment, networks and alliances will be the foundation on which empowerment is built" (p109).

Indeed projects claimed to network "with anyone and everyone" (SYAP Interview). Some acted as "a catalyst to get folk together" (SYAP Interview), generally within less formal and more participative networks, reflecting Taylor's (1995) promotion of "looser and more flexible" networks at all levels. Others "never really got round to it", consequently experiencing "isolation", remaining "quite insular" (SAMH Interviews), and finding that "because we're so small, often issues bypass us altogether" (FCLD Interview). Political networking was identified as a particularly "crucial" resource for "unlocking the money" (FCLD Interview), with exclusion from such networks blamed by at least one project for blocking their planned expansion (FCLD Document²²).

In terms of other shared resources, Fried (1994) claims that "People join together to make social change because mobilisation and co-ordination make success more likely" (p563). Alinsky (1972) regards organisation as the key to power, whilst MacLeod (undated) adds that "Power comes in two forms: organised people and organised money" (p3). Thus "in the beginning, you organize to get organized. Then you organize to get power" (Stoecker 1997b p40). Commentators noted that the development of these resources took time as "insular" groups (SYAP Interview) slowly shifted to establish a "corporate identity" (DCHP Interview) of shared goals. Although solidarity was valued once established, this research more commonly

²² Foundation for Community Leadership Development (1991) Council of Management Minutes 27.11.91.

identified competitive relationships between and within projects amongst potentially useful allies:

"Sometimes we trainers as advocates are our own worst enemy. There's a phase just now of people saying, 'My advocacy project is better than yours', and they're working against each other. You know I don't think that's helpful. All the advocacy projects should be ... supporting each other rather than fighting for resources and finances. I hate it - it's all empire-building" (SAMH Interview).

Conclusion

"Empowerment costs" (Ahlquist 1997 p18).

This chapter has explored resources as a second critical factor in empowerment practice, focusing on six issues of financial empowerment, the level of resources, the source of resources (including access and control), and in turn indigenous, human and shared resources.

This research confirmed "there is a high price to pay" (SAMH Interview) for empowerment practice, suggesting empowerment objectives cannot be achieved for nothing, and calling into question the realism of founders' expectations where resourcing is so limited. Whilst projects generally enjoyed good access to indigenous and non-monetary resources (such as energy, people, networks, knowledge and skills), external resources, in particular money (and the associated time), were harder to come by. Seeking and maintaining these scarcer resources in itself drained projects, with a lack of resources becoming all-controlling and blocking developments in some cases.

However, critically, issues of equality of resources and access and control appeared as significant as resource levels in practising empowerment. In particular this research confirmed users' inability to access significant levels of formal resources. Such difficulties are further explored in the next chapter, which focuses on blocks and barriers in empowerment practice.

4.3 BLOCKS AND BARRIERS IN EMPOWERMENT

Introduction

"If we are able to describe honestly the types of blocks and problems that have been experienced, and I think that's a big 'if', if we're able to do that, the learning from it could be very valuable for people" (EP Interview).

Blocks and barriers form a third critical factor in empowerment practice. Whilst some claim empowerment means removing barriers to power (Betof and Harwood 1992; Gaster 1996; Solomon 1987), the way barriers prevent or slow down empowerment is less commonly explored. This research sought to identify and explore their influence by asking commentators to recall their initial project vision and consider what, if anything, had prevented this being fulfilled. Barriers both within and outwith projects were discussed.

As with resource discussions, many issues raised here were not unique to empowerment practice, supporting Stoecker's (1997a) claim that community organisations inherently face contradiction and challenge:

"While they try to work where government left off, they depend on government; while they try to be community controlled, they need to respond to outside schedules and funds, and while they are effective because they are small, the problems are big" (p12).

This chapter focuses specifically on how barriers impact upon empowerment. Barriers are frequently discussed within the literature, indeed seeming inherent in empowerment work (Keenan and Pinkerton 1988), which "is not easy" (Strathclyde Regional Council 1993). In their research of parent governance, Gruber and Trickett (1987) concluded the many identified difficulties were "less rooted in the peculiarities of alternative schools than in the very nature of the process of empowerment" (p354).

Forewarned is Forearmed: Awareness of Barriers

"I don't have a glorified view of empowerment. To get empowered there's going to be bitter rows, bitter fights, because you're dealing with real people's lives and their emotions. ... I don't have a balmy view of empowerment, where everybody's smiling at each other and cuddling each other" (EP Interview).

As Table 6 highlights, the empowerment literature identifies numerous internal and external barriers to empowerment.

Table 6: Empowerment Theory and Barriers to Empowerment

Author(s)	Term Used to describe 'barriers'	Barriers to Empowerment
Alamgir (1989)	"Constraints to empowerment"	Political parameters, inadequate local leadership, limited access to decision-making structures (internal); unequal access to assets, inadequate government policies and financial support, elite politics and ideology, isolation and alienation (external).
Arnstein (1969)	"Roadblocks to participation"	Racism, paternalism, resistance to power redistribution (powerholders); poor local socio-economic and political infrastructure, alienation, distrust lack of fair representation and accountability (powerless).
Berger (1997)	"Hurdles"	Poverty and unemployment, conflict between local projects and government
Brager (1963)	"Barriers to community integration"	Community characteristics, nature of lower income adults, structure of community organisations.
Fawcett et al (1994)	"Stresses and barriers"	Lack of opportunity, discrimination, punishment and excessive behavioural requirements, environmental barriers and hazards, poverty and deprivation.
Gruber and Trickelt (1987)	"Obstacles in the empowerment process"	Inegalitarian structures and resource distribution.
Kernaghan (1992)	"Obstacles to empowerment"	Organisational structures, lack of resources, lack of commitment to empowerment, management resistance,
Strathelydc Regional Council (1993 & undated)	"Problems and difficulties in community empowerment"	Legislative and financial constraints, an individualistic culture, representativeness of community leaders, the micro/ macro tension ("strategic/ local"), the degree of willingness to share power, and the under-representation of women in decision-making.

Empowerment practice clearly "has tremendous potential for social conflict" (Chavis and Wandersman 1990 p77), with all projects finding "certain difficulties have arisen which militate against further development of the project work especially with regard to empowerment" (EP Document¹). Such problems ranged from project-specific challenges, such as staffing or management issues, communication and agreeing aims and objectives; to local issues, such as political difficulties or community tensions; and national or global issues, such as funding or shifts in policy. Such barriers left some participants feeling beaten, defeated (Fieldnotes, various) and "like we've just been running against a door for two years" (EP Interview). Consequently "it was like everything that should've been pretty constructive always seemed to turn into a barrier" (EP Interview), and some projects became wholly "problem-oriented" (EP Interview).

There was consequently some support for Preston-Shoot's (1992) assertion that recognising and analysing "power blocks" is crucial in empowerment practice, and

¹ The Empowerment Project (1993) Resumé and Proposal for Future Work 13.7.93.

others' recommendation that identifying potential barriers becomes part of the planning of empowerment-based initiatives (Brager 1963; Teasdale 1994 in Pugh and Richards 1996). Such views suggest difficulties are simply "stepping stones which help us to move forward" (Age Concern Scotland 1995 p1), as:

"Community development ... is about challenge. ... Such challenges should not be used as reasons for not adopting a community development approach, no matter the risks involved, the problems that arise or the dilemmas that ensue!" (Principal Community Education Officers' Group 1996 p304).

The Empowerment Project proposed discussing "current obstacles to empowerment and ways of overcoming these" during their ward staff training sessions (EP Document²). The Foundation for Community Leadership Development offered courses in creative problem-solving, arguing that traditionally people "tend to empower the problem or the barrier rather than the individual or the group that is facing it" (FCLD Document³). Some commentators claimed that such awareness and acknowledgement of barriers "knocked out some grandiosity" (FCLD Interview), leaving them "more realistic and not so idealistic" (SYAP Interview) about empowerment practice:

"I had a great belief previously in local people being involved, having control, and managing things, I really did. ... Having worked with it here, you do wonder" (SCL Interview).

Ignoring barriers was believed to worsen rather than lessen their effect. As one commentator recalled, "We never really confronted the blocks when we should have done. We let the blocks accumulate and accumulate and accumulate" (EP Interview). Yet although awareness of potential barriers was commonly recommended, some commentators warned that an early identification of all possible difficulties may simply discourage any attempt at radical or risky change. The Empowerment Project founders explained their rationale for keeping the Health Board partners in the dark about what were predictable difficulties:

"We weren't going in blind. ... We were certainly aware there'd be issues. ... We were aware that it was about practice and that's delicate. ... It's partly dishonesty on my part. ... I knew the types of conflict and I didn't discuss them with the [Care of the Elderly] Unit 'cos I doubt if they would ever let us in" (EP Interview).

Four overarching barriers to empowerment are discussed here: early mistakes, internal project issues, failure to effect change, and tokenism and low expectations.

² The Empowerment Project (1993) Proposal for Staff Seminars 20.9.93.

³ Foundation for Community Leadership Development (1992) Aims and Philosophical Framework.

"What You Brew Today, You Drink Tomorrow": Early Mistakes

"The very beginning of an organization is a critical period because it will greatly influence whether an organization will become viable" (Wandersman and Giamartino 1980 p226).

Within the literature, the early days are often recognised as the time to identify potential difficulties and prepare strategies and responses. Wilcox (1994) suggests that unless projects focus sufficiently on these stages of initiation and preparation, consequent stages of participation and continuation will remain problematic. Clutterbuck (1995) identifies the early days as critical for communicating aims to all participants and creating a collective forum for the exploration of expectations, fears and practicalities, whilst Labonte (1991) claims that early "problem-naming" is critical to avoid a "false or superficial beginning" (p27). In her empowerment guidelines, Ahlquist (1997) identifies as critical an early "state of preparedness" to take risks, work co-operatively "and fight out the issues", and challenge and change attitudes, structures, policies and practices, claiming this should ensure subsequent difficulties are less blocking (p19).

However the commentators argued that it was only hindsight which highlighted the (subsequently obvious) early barriers. For example Empowerment Project commentators retrospectively identified a string of early but critical mistakes which ultimately left them "on a hiding to nothing" (EP Interview), including failing to consult ward participants and thus imposing the project, disregarding nurses' fears and apprehension, inadequately explaining empowerment and the project's intentions to participants, and allowing partners to avoid making critical agreements. As one commentator concluded "What you brew today, you drink tomorrow. We paid the penalty for not going through that process" (EP Interview). Participants recommended greater recognition of the risks, costs and potential exposure of empowerment where it undoubtedly "opened up a can of worms" (EP Interview):

"One of the lessons is ... if you are going to try and do empowerment work, and you're only doing it in one place, you have to be very clear that it's very exposing, and you have to really negotiate that with whoever you want to do it with" (EP Interview).

Yet projects found the need for "meticulous preparation" (EP Interview), including this identification of early difficulties, was continually ignored amidst "a sense of

great urgency ... to 'prove' ourselves" (DCHP Document⁴) and produce concrete results within limited timescales:

"That's the worry about any new thing that you start up. ... You always feel the eyes are on you, and if this doesn't succeed then that will be that - you've had your shot" (LCDP Interview).

"Keeping Our Own House in Order": Internal Project Issues

"It's hard to be enthusiastic and excited while all this is going on in the background. ... It's been stressful just being here. ... At the moment it looks like I've survived it!" (SW&H Interview).

Shragge (1993) suggests empowerment practice is never "tidy" (p15), being characterised by tensions, contradictions and compromises. This was never more apparent than within projects themselves, with all finding "keeping our own house in order" (SW&H Interview) to be a major challenge, leaving participants "cut off with our own problems which seem to be terribly immense" (SCL Interview). Such internal organisational and administrative problems included poor structures, co-ordination, supervision and leadership, none of which are unique to empowerment practice. Three internal, inter-related barriers are more clearly linked to empowerment, and these are discussed here.

First is internal conflict, with "the battles that went on 'cos of the difference in philosophy" (EP Interview) clearly impacting upon projects' attainment of their empowerment objectives. Commentators noted that "we were all thinking differently" (SAMH Interview), others "had a different idea of what empowerment meant to what I had" (SW&H Interview), and there was "just total misunderstanding of what the project was about and what that really demanded" (EP Interview). This again emphasises the need for "a common understanding of what you're trying to do, even basic guidelines" (EP Interview).⁵ In one project ongoing conflict meant disaffected staff tried "their damndest to shut the project" and "bring the project down" (SW&H Interview). Overall commentators reported that continuing conflict left them "totally and utterly deflated" (SCL Interview), rather than acting as a focus for growth as noted earlier.

⁴ Kennedy, Aine (undated) 'Health for all' - from principles to practice in Drumchapel.

⁵ The importance of establishing shared vision and aims is discussed in (2.3) Aims of Empowerment (Agreeing a Vision: Tensions Between Aims of Empowerment, The Role of Shared Vision, pp100-1).

Second, this research supported Morley's (1995) claim that empowerment is "emotional labour" (p7), with commentators being "emotionally involved" (SCL Fieldnotes) and drained of "nervous energy" (EP Interview). Involvement in empowerment work was variously described as "exhausting" and "traumatic" (EP Interviews), with one departing worker claiming "this post has proved to be the most stressful of my career to date" (SW&H Document⁶).

Third, participants suffered "burnout" (SAMH Interview) due for example to jumping on every "bandwagon" without assessing resources (DCHP Interview), and "an ambitious set of goals with an unpredictable outcome" (SAMH Document⁷) being "hastily agreed" (SCL Document⁸). Some projects found themselves "in a total state of chaos" and facing unending "done by yesterday demands" (Letter from SCL commentator). There was "no rest, no slack" (DCHP Interview) as participants struggled "to stay ahead and keep up with the forces around us" (LCDP Interview). Given these pressures, workers complained their remained a lack of appreciation amongst all participants, particularly users, that "you're not going to change it overnight" (SYAP Interview). As one commentator noted:

"Sometimes in community groups we start off with this wonderful burst of enthusiasm. And then the money's there, the struggle's over, we've got the money. And how do you utilise that?" (SCL Interview).

Such user disillusionment is commonly recognised as an outcome of empowerment's slow speed (Colenutt and Cutten 1994), however arguably users also disproportionately suffer burnout due to the "tyranny of expectation" (Heginbotham 1992 p11), whereby involvement is encouraged beyond their ability or availability. This research confirmed that users frequently feel over-committed and "bombarded" (SAMH Interview).

The sum of these internal project difficulties suggests practising empowerment can be anything but empowering for key participants, and that "We're very aware that people are being told to go and work together. They're not given any assistance as to how you go and do that effectively" (EP Interview). Clearly more support and guidance is critical:

"Much is talked about the idea of 'empowerment' but all too often it seems as if our efforts to empower others end up generating experiences

⁶ Stirling Women and Health Project (1994) Progress Report to Management Committee 29.6.94.

⁷ Tait, Sue (1994) SAMH Advocacy and Empowerment Training Group Evaluation, February 1994.

⁸ Second Chance Learning (1987) Management Committee Minutes 22.9.87.

that have the opposite result, not only just for them, but also for ourselves" (FCLD Document⁹).

"Hitting Your Head Off a Brick Wall": Failing to Effect Change

"There has been a pattern of a possibility being raised, a great case being made about it being totally impossible to address this in any way or the way suggested, and then after a period of time to do the thing that's being suggested" (EP Interview).

Change is a central aim of empowerment,¹⁰ yet several commentators complained that attempting to effect change felt like "hitting your head off a brick wall" (LCDP Interview; EP Interview), and that "from early on the project was Mission Impossible" (EP Interview). Such failure to effect change was explained in three ways.

"Watching Your Back": Fear of Risk-Taking

First, commentators explained that participants were "scared to take risks", as "you're always watching your back" (SW&H Fieldnotes¹¹). Within the literature empowerment is seen as inherently a "difficult, risky undertaking" (Kernaghan 1992 p195), although correspondingly experimentation and risk-taking were identified as critical components of practice (Age Concern Scotland 1995; Pugh and Richards 1996; Stoecker 1997b; Willow 1997; Wolff 1987).

This fear of risk-taking reportedly reflects a general fear of change within the voluntary sector (Knight 1994), yet it is also common in wider empowerment practice where there is often no clear end point (Stevenson and Parsloe 1993). Thus "empowerment involves change. ... A commitment to empowerment is a commitment to innovation" (Clarke and Stewart 1992b pp9&11), or more bluntly "No change, no empowerment" (Ahlquist 1997 p10). The challenge lies in accepting risks (Chavis and Wandersman 1990), learning from them (Baxter 1996) and acknowledging that "the contradictions of ... empowerment must be understood and not wished away" (Colenutt and Cutten 1994 p244). Risk is thus inevitable:

⁹ Foundation for Community Leadership Development (undated) Empowering the People Not the Problems (workshop pack).

¹⁰ As outlined in (2.3) Aims of Empowerment (Contrasting Aims: People-Changing and Structure-Changing, pp89-99).

¹¹ Note this was before the arrival of the new Co-ordinator in 1994.

"I cannot go beyond the limits because then I risk too much. And I have to have a certain control of this risk, not to avoid risk, because there is a way in which not to risk is to commit suicide, and that is too much of a risk! Existing in this world is risking" (Freire in Bruss and Macedo 1985 p13).

Robson et al (1997) note that powerholders particularly fear risk-taking and thus, despite a commitment to user involvement, "limit the power given to users to such an extent that nothing really changes" (p15). The Foundation for Community Leadership Development complained funders were simply "propping up service delivery agencies" (FCLD Interview), recommending ring-fenced "risk/ innovation capital" (FCLD Document¹²) to address Stoecker's (1997a) claim that community organisations are too weak financially "to take risks to produce empowering community organizing" (p11). Empowerment Project participants complained the Health Board managers "want you to prove things before[hand] - they want the proof of the pudding before you've done it" (EP Interview), whilst others agreed that powerholders failed to understand the need to establish an environment "where people can take risks" (SW&H Document¹³):

"They seem to think that empowering young people is going to be a smooth journey. But always the positive aspects of empowerment are looked at. Nobody really sees that there is positive aspects in allowing them to make a mistake" (SYAP Interview).

However users can also be unwilling to take risks, displaying "unease ... about acting collectively and ... fear of discrimination as service users" (Association of Directors of Social Work 1995 p38). Amongst the projects, some users did appear fearful of alternative ways of working, tending to stick with familiar approaches. Thus workers faced a dilemma between following users' pace or pushing for riskier innovative approaches, with the tried and tested approaches commonly winning over.

Don't Blame Me! The Role of Other Organisations

Second, projects found themselves unable to effect change due to a culture of conflict and competition between similar organisations. Brager (1963) cites the hostility and opposition to new initiatives by existing groups and projects as the "major deterrent to involvement" (p36), whilst Stewart and Taylor (1995) also warn of empowerment's "potentially competitive nature (as one initiative fights another)" (p67). Within an increasingly competitive culture of resource distribution, "actions which empower

¹² Stares, Rodney and Demarco, Lawrence (1993) Strengthening the Voluntary Sector in South Tyneside, Foundation for Community Leadership Development.

¹³ Stirling Women and Health Project (1995) Mission Statement.

some may disempower others" (Clarke and Stewart 1992a p24), as one organisation's securing of resources means less remains in the pot (Fawcett et al 1984). Indeed greater empowerment may itself increase conflict and competition, as groups become more powerful, vocal and defensive of their own empires (Fawcett et al 1984). This lack of solidarity and support between initiatives left commentators assuming "there would be no great outcry" (FCLD Interview) if their project ended, as "they [other providers] will be glad to see the back of me" (SYAP Interview).

Such failure to effect change is linked to the hierarchical, rigid or "hostile" settings in which empowerment practice is attempted (Preston-Shoot 1992 p25), with partner organisations differing significantly in method and culture. One Empowerment Project commentator claimed that "passive sabotage" (EP Interview) by the Health Board partners blocked project developments, with meetings continually cancelled, workers receiving the "silent treatment", previous agreements denied, and proposed initiatives continually rejected:

"There was an attitude that the [Care of the Elderly] Unit's already doing everything: 'We've already done this! Been there, seen it, done it!' ... I often felt, why are you in this project? If you're already doing everything, why are we here?" (EP Interview).

Stirling Youth Action Project envisaged their management transfer from Crime Concern Scotland to the local authority's community education service would result in a more shared philosophy. However whilst Crime Concern's views were "clear cut" (SYAP Interview) and diametrically opposed to the project, community education ultimately did not appear to share their radical aims. Like the Foundation for Community Leadership Development, which found "one of our mistakes has been to be too far ahead of the field" (FCLD Interview), the Youth Action Project found little support where it was most expected:

"I held strongly to my beliefs when I was with Crime Concern, and I went to the 'grass is always greener' Comm Ed¹⁴ with their values and philosophies, only to discover that wasn't real in the first place" (SYAP Interview).

More generally, local government reorganisation¹⁵ was looming over almost all of the projects during the fieldwork threatening not only their funding but also the availability of key council officers considered critical to effecting change.

¹⁴ Community Education.

¹⁵ In April 1996, Scotland's two-tier system of district and regional councils was replaced by a unitary structure of thirty-two local authorities.

"Crying in the Rain": Exclusion

Finally, projects were unable to effect change through their exclusion, being "not inside the fold" and left "crying in the rain" (FCLD Interviews). Inclusion was perceived as critical to access powerholders, as "you need to be inside an institution or a system somewhere to be exerting more leverage" (FCLD Interview):

"How can you influence and change a system that you're not a part of? How can the tail wag the dog? How can you leverage what are usually going to be very small resources on a bigger system? ... How can you influence without being killed off?" (FCLD Interview).

Whilst Drumchapel Community Health Project claimed to benefit from the "respectability" and "political protection" offered by its parent Glasgow Healthy City Project (DCHP Document¹⁶), and enjoyed strong connections "at the top" of the local authorities, health board and universities (DCHP Document¹⁷), in contrast the Foundation for Community Leadership Development found itself excluded from such influential networks. Although their supervising agency claimed they "get no more complaints about them that we do about any other training agency. In fact we get less recently" (FCLD Interview), FCLD's alternative training and development methods led to a damaging reputation as a "touchy feely" (FCLD Interview) organisation:

"One of the barriers is that we've been perceived very much as the sort of 'other', selling something American or wacky. Somebody accused us of being Scientologists! ... It can be very damaging, even though it's silly. It sticks" (FCLD Interview).

In many cases however one person's barrier is another person's helping hand, and such exclusion from the mainstream is a case in point. Being on the outside allows for greater innovation and freedom, and "you can feed ideas in" (FCLD Interview). There is consequently a tension "between wanting to be inside the system, accepted by the system, supported by the system, yet fearful of encapsulation, absorption or being watered down, blunted or having your key principles or key themes sort of sliding away" (FCLD Interview). Such views reflect Barr's (1995) observation that "groups are highly resistant to being colonised by the state" (p8), or as Second Chance Learning found:

"We are constantly on the margins, not in there. But I know the penalties of being in there, that you have to give up some of your autonomy and some of what you think is important" (SCL Interview).

¹⁶ Kennedy, Aine (1994) Practising 'Health for All' in a Glasgow Housing Scheme: The Drumchapel Healthy Cities Project 1990-1992.

¹⁷ Kennedy, Aine (1994) Practising 'Health for All' in a Glasgow Housing Scheme: The Drumchapel Healthy Cities Project 1990-1992.

Seeking Small Wins

These reasons for failure to effect change - fear of risk-taking, other organisations' action (or inaction) and exclusion - mean that empowerment practice is often limited to "small wins" (Weick 1986 p35) or "quick victories" (Mondros and Wilson 1994 p197). Examples were given by all projects of small achievements or events which had an ongoing or defining influence, and acted as "glimmers of hope" (EP Interview) within otherwise difficult practice. Weick (1986) argues that small wins become significant through their cumulative effects:

"By itself, one small win may seem unimportant. A series of wins at small but significant tasks, however, reveals a pattern that may attract allies, deter opponents, and lower resistance to subsequent proposals" (p35).

Yet some question whether "small wins" equate to empowerment, if empowerment means effecting significant and lasting change. This issue of sustainable change is critical, as whilst all projects could demonstrate numerous success stories, most were limited in lifespan and influence, and remained "a few steps short of a highly effective way of accelerating social change" (FCLD Interview). Stewart and Taylor (1995) claim this is "a key element in the empowerment process", as "empowerment has to ... be evaluated in terms of its continuity, ... its sustainability" (p18). The projects' experience however tended to reflect Stoecker's (1997a) finding that the sustainability of community-based initiatives is limited and the survival rate is poor.

The most sustainable groups and initiatives tended to be relatively independent off-shoots, securing their own funding and staff team. Examples here include Drumchapel Community Health Project's men's health project, community health magazine and Safe Kids Loan Scheme, and the Lothian Coalition of Disabled People's Lothian Centre for Integrated Living, Grapevine information service and Access Ability initiative. At the other extreme was the SAMH Advocacy and Empowerment Group, which was unable to secure ongoing funding and upon whose dissolution little tangible and lasting remained. Similarly, as the Empowerment Project entered its final months, a member of nursing staff claimed "I can't wait until this project's off the ward and we can all get back to normal!" (EP Fieldnotes), suggesting the project's collection of small wins could be quickly reversed in a rapid return to 'normality'.

"False Empowerment": Tokenism and Low Expectations

"Empowerment may go wrong. It may be used as a mobilizing slogan, while subtly coopting support for centralized decisions. It may be promoted courageously and altruistically, only to empower actors who subsequently disenfranchise others. It may give rise to institutional structures that empower one group to empower others - such as social services - which too often inadvertently create or perpetuate dependency" (Donelan 1995 p38).

The final barrier explored here concerns the "critical difference" between "the empty ritual of participation" and "real power" (Arnstein 1969 p216). The empowerment literature frequently discusses this gap between "true", "real" or "genuine" empowerment and that which is "false" or "lip service" (Barnes and Walker 1996; Betof and Harwood 1992; Hayton 1995; Heginbotham 1992; Mills 1992). This "hypocrisy gap" (Foy 1994 p84) between promised and consequent outcomes is blamed for lowering participants' expectations:

"To tell people they have power and responsibility, and then not empower them with responsibility, dissolves morale, lowers your leadership credibility, and creates hostility and opposition" (Betof and Harwood 1992 p32).

Experiences of Powerlessness

The literature commonly recognises that expectations are lowered through levels of powerlessness which "break people's spirit" (Kieffer 1984 p16) and make them "more willing to accept parts of the world we would otherwise reject" (Rees 1991 p27). Community psychology identifies low expectations as an outcome of the "surplus powerlessness" (Lerner 1986) or "learned helplessness" (Massie 1989 p46; also Seligman 1975 in Labonte 1991; Zimmerman 1990a) which stems from continual lack of control over one's life. As this Lothian Coalition of Disabled People commentator explained:

"If you've lived your life as a disabled person in which you've been told, 'You're not able', or 'You can't', or 'That isn't for you', or 'Do this because you are that', it shouldn't be surprising that you get to 45 years old and are not really sure whether you've got a right to express an opinion" (LCDP Interview).

Stewart and Taylor (1995) claim that users are "caught in a spiral of disempowerment" (pvi) reinforced by continuing poverty, marginalisation, lack of confidence and exclusion from decision-making opportunities. Yet as Baistow (1994) suggests:

"A dose of empowerment should provide a solution that is both panaceaic and prophylactic. However, it is, of course, unlikely that things are that simple: the 'problems' are complex, multiple and interconnected and it is

doubtful whether they can be solved by a unitary solution under the banner of 'empowerment' (p40).

Low expectations relate to users' repeated experiences of undelivered goals and promises, with Berger (1997) warning that "the problem with unrealistic expectations is that they breed scepticism when they fail" (p9; also Fawcett et al 1994). Indeed when adults' promises of accommodation, facilities and resources repeatedly failed to deliver, Stirling Youth Action Project's young users quickly "became demoralised by the tantalising prospects offered in quick fix solutions which divert their attention and come to nothing" (SYAP Document¹⁸). However ultimately they found the project offered more hope for change than previous initiatives, challenging their cynicism. As these two users explained:

- We've heard it all before: 'What would you like?', 'What would you like?', then the wifie going away and she wouldnae come back.
- That's what we thought when she [worker] came up that first time. ... The general idea was we'd heard this all before, but we went along. She was really good with us: done things that nobody else had done for us" (SYAP Interview).

Other commentators however remained critical of "all the tokenism" (SAMH Interview) of empowerment practice, with users in particular doubting whether more powerful participants actually want change. Their views reflect Koneya's (1978) claim that "The cynicism of the poor rises with each increasing use of the ideology which does not produce positive results for them and their living areas" (p24), or as one of the Drumchapel community health volunteers claimed:

"I think it [empowerment] is a load of crap basically. ... We were empowered to take on the world, ... but we weren't getting the backing of the professionals because of the threat of losing funding, the threat of this, the threat of that. ... I mean you're allowed to participate, or so many of you to participate, they get you empowered but they don't back it up" (DCHP Interview).

Such cynical views are echoed in the broader empowerment literature, particularly in organisational development and management. For example Clutterbuck (1995) warns employers against using the term empowerment, as employees may be disillusioned when they discover no real power transfer has occurred, whilst Kizilos (1990) notes that managers hope that employee empowerment will create:

"... energetic, dedicated workers who always seize the initiative (but only when 'appropriate'), who enjoy taking risks (but never *risky* ones), who volunteer their ideas (but only brilliant ones), who solve problems on their own (but make no mistakes), who aren't afraid to speak their minds (but never ruffle any feathers), who always give their best to the company (but ask no unpleasant questions about what the company is

¹⁸ Stirling Youth Action Project (1993) Progress Report September 1993.

giving them back). How nice it would be ... to empower workers without actually giving them any power" (p56 in Kernaghan 1992 p206).

Notably such pessimism is not restricted to users, with Craig et al (1990) suggesting that workers are also struggling to regain levels of optimism characterising earlier decades of community development. This overall "lack of a match between rhetoric and reality of empowerment practice" (Barr 1995b p7) left workers wondering "how do you actually go about making these people understand that they can make a difference to their lives?" (SW&H Interview). Suggestions within the literature include teaching users "learned hopefulness", emphasising positive thinking and feelings of control (Zimmerman 1990a p72), encouraging powerless people to recognise themselves as causal forces (Solomon 1987), and focusing on winnable issues (Alinsky 1972). However the Foundation for Community Leadership Development found their promotion of such positive methods was considered "the realm of talking to trees and the fairies", meaning they ultimately played down the "very upbeat This Will Change Your Life" element (FCLD Interview). Similarly the Empowerment Project workers claimed nursing staff believed they had their "heads in the clouds" (EP Interview).

Some are More Equal than Others

Power inequalities are described by Barnes et al (1996) as a highly significant barrier in empowerment, whilst Barr (1995b) warns that "traditional power structures and operational practices have to change" (p7). In this research, commentators identified differential levels of power as particularly problematic in so-called 'partnerships' between projects and other service providers who, despite their greater power, clearly felt threatened by these independent, relatively free and innovative projects. Promises of equal partnership appeared unlikely:

"We've got to have a relationship with them, 'cos they have the power to pull the plug on us. I said something similar to comm ed¹⁹ and they said, 'Oh, it's not like that. It's a partnership!' I said, 'How can it be a partnership when in fact you have all that power?'" (SCL Interview).

However within individual organisations participants also doubted power holders' commitment to empowerment as power-sharing. One commentator recalled a manager claiming "I didn't get where I am today by giving away power" (EP Interview), echoing Kirkpatrick's (1992) suggestion that managers' understanding of

¹⁹ Community Education.

power as zero-sum²⁰ means empowerment guarantees their redundancy (also Betof and Harwood 1992; Kernaghan 1992).

Stirling Youth Action Project provides an insightful illustration of this. The young people planning the summer activities programme were responsible for appointing a sessional worker and, following interviews, they made their choice. When the community education worker tried to overrule their decision they reminded her that the project's promotion of youth empowerment included user-led decision-making. Eventually their original choice was honoured, but as their programme evaluation concluded, this taught all participants a hard lesson about power and empowerment:

"The interesting lesson learned for workers was when young people are empowered to take decisions, their decision-making may be in conflict with the workers. We as workers must in certain situations be flexible enough to relinquish our own power in order to avoid adopting a tokenistic approach to young people's involvement in the decision-making process" (SYAP Document²¹).

Empowerment approaches also lost credibility through organisations 'promoting' and rewarding more articulate project users to the exclusion of others. One project identified this as a "power dilemma" between limiting the tendency of the most vocal, articulate and powerful individuals to exclude others, whilst not alienating them and maximising their abilities (SYAP Document²²). Clearly those tasting power "can deny power to others through exclusion" (Stewart and Taylor 1995 p14; also Labonte 1991). As Lukes (1974) questions, "Can we always assume that the victims of injustice and inequality would, but for the exercise of power, strive for justice and equality?" (p46).

Preston-Shoot (1992) argues that it is not equality of power which is critical in empowerment, but rather an acknowledgement of power imbalances. Simon (1994) agrees that "... the client and worker would be utopian fools to seek equality of power. Instead, they would be wise to pursue 'equal moral agency'" (p12). Willow (1997) found that successful participation initiatives defined the planned extent of shared decision-making. Some commentators also called for recognition of power differences as much as equality:

"At the end of the day not everybody in the project has the same power as the next person. So it's not all of us are equal. It doesn't work like that. ...

²⁰ Zero sum power is defined and discussed in the (1.2) Power and Empowerment (p34).

²¹ Martin, Ruth; Callaghan, Frances and Ross, Veronica (1994) Partnership in Practice: A Joint Report on St Ninian's Summer Activities for Teenagers '94 Stirling Youth Action Project and Central Regional Council Community Education Service.

²² Beaton, Janice (1994) St Ninian's Summer Planning Group: Report for BACE 2 Jordanhill College of Education.

I don't think that we all have an equal say in where the project is going"
(SW&H Interview).

However ultimately they also recognised that "If you don't have a power base, you're going to get blown away" (FCLD Interview).

Conclusion

This chapter has explored four overarching blocks and barriers as a third and final critical factor in empowerment practice. This discussion first illustrated the ongoing and seemingly irreversible impact of early mistakes, whilst recognising the difficulty of finding time in the early days to correct these, when ignoring them seems quicker. A second groups of barriers is found within projects, in terms of the internal conflict, "emotional labour" and burnout associated with empowerment work. Third, this research suggests a failure to effect change leads projects to, perhaps prematurely, accept "small wins" rather than pushing for more radical movement. Such failure was traced in particular to a fear of risk-taking, other organisations' actions, and exclusion. Finally, tokenism and low expectations stem from experiences of powerlessness, "false empowerment" and power inequalities, blocking participants' expectations of change.

Commentators repeatedly claimed that empowerment practice was "more difficult than I had ever imagined" (EP Interview), and "it's always more difficult than you think!" (LCDP Interview). The danger is that such issues consume so much energy that they "simply divert attention from the more exploitative structures of power in society" (Stewart and Taylor 1995 p67). Overall this chapter suggests support for Croft and Beresford's (1988b) call for realism around possible outcomes, costs and benefits, with one of the clearest lessons being the importance of awareness of barriers, suggesting planning processes and ongoing reviews of practice ignore blocks and challenges at their peril.

PART FIVE

CONCEPTUALISING EMPOWERMENT

5.0 INTRODUCTION

Part Five of this thesis focuses on the relationship between key conceptualisations of empowerment and models of practice, illustrating how thinking about empowerment affects practice, and in turn how experiences of practice effect conceptualisation. This relationship is therefore circular rather than linear.

Chapter 5.1 explores empowerment's two pure forms, as product and process. The critical implications for practice of this distinction are outlined, in that empowerment is variously conceptualised as a goal or method; a 'quick fix' or a slow process; and as concrete or fluid in appearance.

Chapter 5.2 discusses empowerment as an incremental concept, mapping overarching steps and stages of personal, social and political development. A further stage of moving on and transferring empowerment elsewhere is also reviewed. This chapter identifies a far from mechanistic movement through steps and stages, and suggests individuals and groups commonly become stuck, skip or repeat stages, or go in several directions at once.

Chapter 5.3 examines the movement, or dynamics, of power within empowerment. Five such dynamics - giving, giving up, seizing, sharing and awakening power - are critically discussed, identifying the key characteristics and limitations of each. Crucially, these are not mutually exclusive, more typically co-existing in practice.

Chapter 5.4 outlines three ways in which empowerment is identified: as feeling powerful (perception), having potential power (capacity) and exercising power (action). Each of these is shown to have its own implications for practice, in particular for measuring and evaluating empowerment.

5.1 THE FORM OF EMPOWERMENT

Introduction

"Empowerment ... means diversity of form" (Rappaport 1984 p4).

This first chapter in Part Five focuses on empowerment's two pure forms: product and process.

The critical distinction between these is first outlined, before three key issues around form are discussed: the implications for practice if empowerment is a goal or a method; the tension between empowerment as a quick fix or slow process; and finally issues around definition and measurement where empowerment is concrete or fluid.

Product and Process: A Critical Distinction

"A distinction between empowering processes and outcomes is critical in order to clearly define empowerment theory. Empowerment processes are ones by which attempts to gain control, obtain needed resources, and critically understand one's social environment are fundamental. ... Empowered outcomes refer to the operationalization of empowerment so we can study the consequences of citizen attempts to gain greater control in their community or the effects of interventions designed to empower participants" (Zimmerman in press, quoted in Fetterman 1996 p4).

Empowerment, like power, is conceptualised in two pure forms: a concrete, tangible product and an ongoing, fluid process. This distinction between product and process provides the empowerment literature with one of its most central themes. Pugh and Richard's (1996) claim that "Empowerment ... in our view is most usefully conceptualised as a goal" (p40) is supported by many others (Price 1990; Mondros and Wilson 1994; Gibson 1991). More common however are process-based conceptualisations, whereby empowerment is variously described as "a dignifying process" (Rose and Black 1985 p20), "a mechanism" (Rappaport 1984 p3), "a process of helping" and "a social process" (Gibson 1991 p354; p359), "a transforming process" (Kieffer 1984 p26), or "essentially a method" (Solomon 1987 p80) (see also Adams 1990; Baistow 1994; Barnes and Walker 1996; Bowes 1996; Churchman 1987; Evans 1992; Gibson 1991; Kieffer 1984; Myers 1995; O'Gorman 1990; Rappaport et al 1984; Rees 1991; Rose and Black 1985; Rowlands 1995; Servian 1996; Shragge 1993; Wolff 1987).

Other writers embrace both forms, defining empowerment as both "a goal" and "a process" (Simon 1990; Stevenson and Parsloe 1993), or discussing both "the road to empowerment", suggesting a concrete destination, and "the empowerment process" (Kernaghan 1992; Foy 1994). Similarly Age Concern Scotland's (1995) 'Empowerment Checklist' asks "Is the empowerment process recognised as valid in itself as well as a means to an end?" (p3). Such discussions usefully suggest that product and process are not mutually exclusive, but rather sit at either end of a continuum. This gives empowerment "dual meaning", referring "both to a longitudinal dynamic of development and to attainment of a set of insights and abilities" (Kieffer 1984 pp17-18). Thus forms of empowerment are effectively interdependent in practice, as "every well executed task has a good process and every good process has a task" (FCLD Interview).

The pairing of product and process is neither new nor unique to empowerment. As noted earlier,¹ if power is concrete, empowerment means holding tangible power, and individuals are either empowered (power-holding) or not (powerless). Conversely if power is relational, empowerment shifts across situations, contexts or relationships:

"To us, *power* connotes both a process by which it is attained (i.e., the concrete activities one pursues to exercise influence) and an outcome (i.e., actual power measured by the extent to which another's activities conform to one's preferences)" (Mondros and Wilson 1994 p5).

This product - process dimension also appears in the literature on participation (Churchman 1987; Nagel 1987), oppression (Ward and Mullender 1991), evaluation (Fetterman 1996), community psychology (Zimmerman in press) and community development (Bruyn 1963; Christenson 1989; Littrell and Hobbs 1989). In community development the interdependence of task and process provides a particularly prominent theme, with tasks focusing practice and providing concrete observable outcomes whilst processes provide opportunities for participation and critical reflection. However although community development involves "negotiating the tension between process and product" (Macleod undated p8), process is again the prominent form:

"Community development is a means, not an end. Empowerment, organization, self-help projects, solidarity, revindication, networking, popular education - all these are instruments, not aims" (O'Gorman 1990 p391).

Whilst identifiable elsewhere, discussions around form hold particular relevance for empowerment practice. Process may predominate within empowerment theory,

¹ In (1.2) Power and Empowerment (pp28-35).

however in practice the current economic and managerial climate of performance indicators and cost containment has ensured funders, managers and regulators seem keener to evaluate success via outputs or outcomes rather than the quality of processes. Within this research, interest in empowerment was focused as much on what projects do (the product) as how they do it (the process), and thus both pure forms are discussed here.

Goals or Methods ? Implications for Practice

Empowerment's form has clear implications for models of practice. Where empowerment is seen as a product, practice is directed towards an ideal and final goal at "some nirvana that you reach" (EP Interview), whilst process-based conceptualisations push practice towards ongoing reflection over methods and relationships by using empowerment as a mechanism or tool (Morrison and Stapleton 1996).

This research identified three practical implications of product-oriented approaches. First, this form of empowerment underpins service organisations, as needs and demands for concrete services cannot be satisfied through processes alone. Reinelt (1994) argues for this primacy of product amongst service providers, or "decision-making groups":

"The process of collective empowerment has not been as thoroughly explored in the context of decision-making groups, such as rape crisis centres and battered women shelters. ... Much of the decision-making groups' attention needs to be directed towards efficiently providing these services. Process can no longer be the primary focus of attention" (Reinelt 1994 p689).

Second, commentators suggested that producing tangible results helps attract and maintain financial and participative support amongst project users, funders and staff. For example the Empowerment Project found far greater support amongst ward participants for "tangibles" (EP Interview), such as new activities and services for patients, rather than the process-based reviews of relationships, attitudes and structures which they were keen to progress.

Third, focusing on concrete goals was believed to offer direction, momentum and incentive, supporting Power's (1987) identification of "results" as a key principle of effective participation (in Stewart and Taylor 1995). Even where concrete goals and objectives were ultimately unattainable, commentators claimed they achieved much "in the learning, in attempting to get there" (EP Interview). If no "there" exists,

practice is left directionless and participants unmotivated. Commentators also argued that the achievement of concrete outcomes made individuals feel they made a difference, maintaining involvement and addressing low expectations.² As Arnstein (1969) suggests, there is a "critical difference between going through the empty ritual of participation and having the real power needed to affect the outcomes of the process" (p216), or rather there is little worth in a process which has no outcome. This again illustrates the interdependence of process and product: a good process requires the prospect of final goals.

A number of commentators claimed to be late 'converts' to product-oriented approaches. For example Second Chance Learning found "some students voted with their feet" (SCL Interview) during their early emphasis on group development and process-oriented classes. The project consequently shifted towards more outcome-based certificated and accredited courses (SCL Document³), retaining only a few informal, process-based activities such as the Wednesday Chat-In (discussion group). Similarly, the Foundation for Community Leadership Development found their initially strong focus on process-oriented empowerment limited participation amongst those preferring to work primarily with tasks or products:

"After about two years, we were getting a sense that the whole training was very, very heavily based on process. ... We were giving people the process skills, and that spoke to certain people who were closest to needing those skills, particularly those in social care situations. But it didn't speak to people who had a very strong task focus. ... So it was going through my mind that it would be good to find a task that dragged along behind it certain process skill requirements" (FCLD Interview).

FCLD recognised that "We can't just talk about how we feel" (FCLD Interview), consequently moving towards approaches such as neighbourhood mediation and conflict resolution in which "in the context of focusing on the task, deal with some of the process".

However other commentators were adamant that successful results depended on solid process-oriented practice rather than the reverse, arguing that "you can't get to the end without the process" (SAMH Interview), and "without the process you can forget the end product - it's all in the process or it's nothing" (EP Interview). Such process-based approaches also had three identifiable implications for empowerment practice.

² As discussed in (4.3) Blocks and Barriers in Empowerment (False Empowerment - Tokenism and Low Expectations, Experiences of Powerlessness, pp207-9).

³ Second Chance Learning (1992) Student Day 22, 10.92.

First, commentators claimed that focusing on processes offers an adaptable and flexible way of working, allowing them to continually "talk and criticise and go back to the drawing board" (EP Interview). Working with processes is less prescriptive, as outcomes are impossible to predict or stage-manage, which offers freedom and other advantages:

"The most noticeable feature of this approach ... is the lack of one single milestone which could be said to mark the outcome of the project. Instead, typically activities are perceived as processes ... which develop in an open-ended way" (Adams 1990 p46).

Second, process-based approaches value skills, methods and mechanisms. The Foundation for Community Leadership Development claimed much could be learned from private industry's ability to "make dramatic improvement in the balance of results to effort" (FCLD Document⁴), where changing processes is perceived as a critical route to improving outcomes. The Foundation consequently offered training in essential "process skills", such as counselling, assertiveness, groupwork, communication, prejudice reduction, conflict resolution and coalition building.

Third, process-oriented practice promotes alternative worker-user relationships, whereby "you're directive in terms of the process, but not in terms of the goals" (SYAP Interview). Baistow (1994) suggests this model requires responsive, flexible workers:

"If empowerment is a process that takes place over time then it seems highly likely that the timespan will vary according to the 'needs' and situation of the candidates concerned" (p43).

Just as some commentators were late converts to product-oriented approaches, others took time to recognise empowerment primarily as a process. For example a member of the Lothian Coalition of Disabled People considered himself reasonably empowered before joining the project, only later acknowledging an unfulfilled potential:

"I didn't think I needed particularly empowering, and parts of me probably didn't before I was involved with the Coalition. I've recognised changes in myself which point to even more possibilities just in me. So for everyone there'll never be a final achievement in empowerment" (LCDP Interview).

Such learning came from the discovery that empowerment is unpredictable and complex, and thus predetermining end products was unhelpful and misleading, if not impossible. As another commentator noted:

⁴ Foundation for Community Leadership Development (1989/90) Overview of Aims, Objectives and Activities, and Lothian Community Leadership Fund (1994) Course Brochure 1994/5.

"I think I've got more and more confident that it's not a simple process, and it's not one that you should control, ... and that in fact empowerment is a process - it's not a task to be carried out. ... I've got clearer about that" (FCLD Interview).

The Speed of Empowerment: Quick Fix or Slow Process?

A second aspect of the critical distinction between product and process refers to the contrasting speed of each form.

The slow speed and long timescale of empowerment processes were commonly highlighted by commentators, as empowerment here is an infinite path which is "ongoing - there is no end goal" (SAMH Interview), involving "a movement all the time - never ending" (SCL Interview). Consequently "Nobody's totally empowered anyway, no matter what their situation is" (LCDP Interview):

"Unless you've got a very static view and limited view of what makes a person and their capacity, I think you've got to say that empowerment is a kind of continuing and organic process. ... There's always new situations, new relationships and new things to be learned" (FCLD Interview).

Commentators claimed this slow speed was inevitable, as project users were commonly power novices, "who have never really been empowered, who from day one have been dictated to, the whole way along their lives" (EP Interview). Expecting a "gradual process" (SAMH Interview) was believed to increase participants' realism about possible achievements, or as one SAMH trainee recognised "You can't become an advocate by coming to a group on a Wednesday!" (SAMH Interview). Commentators thus learned to appreciate "small gains" (SYAP Interview) as indicators of success,⁵ reflecting Simon's (1994) advice to "Be patient" (p30) (also Colenutt and Cutten 1994). As one member of the Stirling Women and Health Project Outdoor Activities Group claimed of the new opportunities her involvement brought:

"I think all these wee things are important when you've not got anything else going on in your life. ... Gradually I think all these things matter, and they helped to empower me" (SW&H Interview).

Support for slow processes came in particular from those suspicious of "Eureka type stuff" (FCLD Interview), echoing warnings in the literature against seeing empowerment as "a panacea or a quick fix" (Kernaghan 1992 p206), and to "avoid looking for a single solution" (Willow 1997 p97). As Colenutt and Cutten (1994) caution:

⁵ The issue of small gains or "small wins" was discussed in (4.3) Blocks and Barriers ("Hitting Your Head Off a Brick Wall": Failing to Effect Change, Seeking Small Wins, pp206).

"Community empowerment is not a magical answer to urban deprivation or economic crisis. ... Nor is it an instant solution: just as quality regeneration takes time, so does community empowerment" (p249).

Commentators remained frustrated by funders and policy-makers, whom they argued continued to display "Project-think", assuming that parachuting in successive one-off initiatives will solve diverse, complex and longstanding problems in one fell swoop:

"Projects can act as a catalyst for change, but I hate 'Project-think', you know the idea that you can have one project or one initiative that will solve all the problems. ... The principles should apply to all work ... and should be applied to people within the organisation they work for" (SYAP Interview).

Such expectations meant projects were assessed on their tangible results, even if funders claimed commitment to process-based empowerment. Such concrete outcomes were sought in some cases "at all costs despite the process" (SYAP Interview). For example the Empowerment Project achieved tangible results such as a trolley service, newspaper delivery service and volunteer programme, however they ultimately failed to influence key processes, such as the involvement of patients and relatives in ward decision-making. Here "the crucial thing has been the lack of process as opposed to tangible things" (EP Interview). Projects also found other agencies keener on products than processes:

"The process to me is fundamental. ... To me the 'how you do it' is more important than the 'what you do', especially in empowerment. ... Very often there's this conflict with agencies working together, because the way we do it can be quite different" (SW&H Interview).

Alcock et al (1996) identified this short-term "need to be *seen to be* acting and producing results" (p46) in local anti-poverty programmes, rather than long-term planning, innovation or creativity. They claim this pressure for "discernible" (p46) results does "little to address the lack of empowerment or citizenship rights experienced by the poor" (p47), whilst a strong commitment to process offers greater stability, as established mechanisms and approaches last beyond individual achievements.

However other commentators called for more concrete results, expressing disappointment at not having "got somewhere by now" (EP Interview):

"We've done a certain amount of raising awareness about empowerment and what it means. I wouldn't be so naïve as to say there was any individual who had been empowered through their experience in this project" (EP Interview).

There is an obvious tension between conceptualising empowerment as a process, whilst working towards (and critically only being acknowledged and rewarded for)

concrete results. In addition, whilst going slow may increase users' confidence, trust and ownership, commentators noted frustration at the time required and the necessity of allowing users and workers to learn from their own mistakes (SYAP Document⁶).

The temptation was clear for workers to produce faster by being more directive:

"It can be a slow process, empowerment, and that's the bit I think that folk get frustrated with. So they then start doing things for people. ... It's [about] leaving enough time for people, because not everybody will move at the same pace. ... That depends where people are in their lives" (SW&H Interview).

Empowerment as Concrete or Fluid: Definition and Measurement

Whilst conceptualising empowerment as a product suggests it is concrete and visible, processes are more fluid and shifting. These attributes have clear implications for definition and measurement.

When defining empowerment, commentators used images of both concrete products and fluid processes. The former included images of empowerment as a sudden dawning of light or fire, such as a "glow" (FCLD Interview), "lightbulbs going off" (SYAP Interview), "something lighting up" (LCDP Interview), or a fire which "smoulders away within you, and then it suddenly bursts into flames" (LCDP Interview). The latter included images of water or nature, with empowerment identified when "ripples begin to reach the shore" (FCLD Interview) and where "someone has sort of blossomed out to do their own thing" (LCDP Interview).

Product-based definitions are consistent with consumerist interpretations of empowerment, whereby it is concretised in the form of rights, services or contracts to be negotiated by individuals.⁷ Process-based definitions alternatively reflect postmodernist interpretations of society as a fluid collection of ever-shifting, never-ending and diverse processes (Williams 1992), with no fixed phenomenon called empowerment. Commentators claimed this latter "ongoing and everchanging" (LCDP Interview) analysis better acknowledged the "changing environment" (DCHP Interview) of political, financial and local government structures within which they operate, as "the goalposts are forever being moved" (LCDP Interview). Likewise participants lead far from static private lives, facing unpredictable personal and family circumstances, and empowerment practice has to reflect this picture:

⁶ Beaton, Janice (1994) St Ninian's Summer Planning Group: Report for BACE 2 Jordanhill College of Education.

⁷ Consumerist interpretations of empowerment were discussed in (2.1) The Roots of Empowerment (Ideological and Political Trends, pp66-9).

"I think it's an ongoing process because we live in a changing world, and if people are empowered to today's standards, tomorrow those standards will have changed and they'll need to be re-empowered" (LCDP Interview).

Yet projects continue to seek concrete and observable results, again suggesting that rather than being mutually exclusive, product and process are mutually reinforcing forms of empowerment. Importantly therefore "both products and processes have certain results" (SYAP Document⁸), and "the process is what produces the results we have" (LCDP Interview). Such interdependence and mutual growth suggest empowerment is "like a snowball rolling down a hill. The further down the hill we go the more [results] we collect" (LCDP Interview):

"The term 'empowerment' ... is typically taken to mean a process of increasing personal, interpersonal, political or economic power so that individuals, groups and communities can take action to improve their life situation" (Evans 1992 p141).

These varying images and definitions have significant implications for measuring empowerment. Product-related indicators measure concrete outcomes, such as user numbers or the spread of groups or services. Process-based indicators explore more qualitative and relational aspects of empowerment, such as perceived changes in participants and the nature of relationships. Whilst the literature suggests that both processes and products can and should be evaluated (Baxter 1996; Rappaport 1984), debate continues as to which form should predominate as an indicator of success (Churchman 1987).

Clearly measurements of concrete products are more straightforward, being easily quantifiable and observable, whilst assessments of fluid processes suffer from this being "a vague term. One cannot see, feel or bump into a process; one only infers from human behaviour that it is occurring" (Sanders in Bruyn 1963 Foreword). Such evaluative problems discourage some from this approach:

"In general workers and administrators are keen on work that can be readily seen and counted. ... Process results are far less tangible. They are to do with relationships, the strengthening of people's competence and feelings. One of the major difficulties with an approach that emphasises process ... is the relative lack of concrete results by which to judge the work" (SYAP Document⁹).

⁸ Stirling Youth Action Project (1993) Evaluation Report: Youth Action Training Weekend 5-7 March 1993.

⁹ Stirling Youth Action Project (1993) Evaluation Report: Youth Action Training Weekend 5-7 March 1993.

In response to such difficulties in evaluating processes (Gibson 1991), Drumchapel Community Health Project designed a new evaluation format which was "predominantly concerned with processes rather than outcomes". This relied on interviews with users and volunteers, user-completion questionnaires and observations of project processes (DCHP Document¹⁰). Whilst some commentators suggested numerical or concrete product-oriented measurements were more influential on funders or policy makers, a clear exception was the apparent weight of participants' personal testimonies, with qualitative case studies acting as powerful evidence of empowerment's 'results'.¹¹

Whatever methods for measuring empowerment are chosen, this research once more highlighted that shared understanding is more critical than perceiving either form as inherently superior. For example if empowerment is conceptualised as a final product, participants must agree what concrete goals are sought, or empowerment will conceivably never be reached:

"You don't know if there is ever an end point. It would be nice to have a goal - everybody's empowered - but when do you know when you've achieved that goal?" (EP Interview).

A number of commentators claimed agreement was reached on the desired products of their empowerment work, yet not the processes to be followed. For example within the Empowerment Project, "That is what we did not hammer out - what is the process of empowerment, as to how you actually get there, and the stages of it" (EP Interview). Commentators suggested tensions around the most appropriate process partly reflected participants' different organisational cultures involved. Whilst voluntary sector participants comfortably perceived empowerment as an ongoing and somewhat unpredictable process, the health board and ward staff participants pushed for more concrete results. As with many of this project's areas of disagreements, the tension around the form of empowerment continued to the end:

"With hindsight I can imagine working on empowerment through audits and quality assurance, but the bit that's missing is the process. Unless they have some sense of process, and discussion involving staff, patients, relatives, and feedback, openness and honesty, unless they have that package with whatever they do, I don't think they're going to be able to be empowering" (EP Interview).

¹⁰ Kennedy, Aine; Fannahill, Carol and Curtice, Lisa (1993) Evaluating 'Health for All' Practice at Community Level: The Drumchapel Healthy Cities Project.

¹¹ The role of personal testimony is discussed further in (5.4) Identifying Empowerment (Measuring and Evaluating Empowerment, p271-3).

Conclusion

"We never established a common model [of empowerment] - that's what it comes back to. We always felt that their attitude to empowerment was [that] they wanted us to be Anneka Rices. They wanted us to go and do stuff with tangible results, whereas we wanted to get to the heart of the issues about attitudes to old people, and their policy towards old people and their money" (EP Interview).

This chapter has explored three key issues around empowerment's form and the critical distinction between product and process: the implications for practice, the speed of change, and finally challenges for definition and measurement.

This demonstrated that product and process are most usefully conceived as sitting at either end of a continuum, as the two forms not only inter-relate but are also inter-dependent and mutually reinforcing (for example where a strong outcome depends on a good process and vice versa). Even though this complex relationship is commonly recognised, commentators tended to perceive one form as superior to the other, with the primacy of each form having demonstrable implications for practice. Product-based interpretations emphasise the importance of service delivery; encourage ongoing support from participants and funders; and help maintain direction and momentum. Process-based models alternatively offer a flexible and adaptable approach; emphasise skills, methods and mechanisms; and promote alternative worker-user relationships.

The tension between the two forms was particularly notable between seemingly 'quick fix' outcome-oriented work and slower process-based approaches, and between alternative approaches to definition and measurement. However, most critically, this research identified once again the need for agreement around conceptualisations of empowerment for shared understanding and direction.

5.2 STEPS AND STAGES IN EMPOWERMENT

Introduction

"The processes of empowerment ... may be apparent in a project which lasts for two years or be present in an educational and political experience which is completed within a few months. Whatever time it takes to achieve objectives, the process of change goes through stages" (Rees 1991 p86).

The conceptualisation of empowerment as a series of steps and stages further develops the dimension of form explored in the previous chapter. If empowerment is an ongoing process, this may represent progression through identifiable steps or stages. Alternatively if empowerment is a product, this may be concretised as a step or stage in itself within or at the end of a wider process. Thus "what is empowerment to one person is just a step on the way to empowerment to another" (Ahlquist 1997 p6).

Commentators were asked whether they conceptualised empowerment in this way, and if so whether specific steps could be identified. Four overarching steps emerged from these discussions: in turn personal, social and political development and moving on beyond projects. Conceptualising empowerment as incremental led to further discussions of empowerment reversal, whereby steps are undone. All of these issues are explored here, beginning more generally by discussing the mapping of steps and stages.

Mapping Steps and Stages

Within the empowerment literature, the concept of steps and stages is widely promoted, although the terminology varies. For example Rees (1991) identifies ten "stages in achieving power" (p99), whilst Heginbotham (1992) talks of steps "to genuine empowerment" (p15), and Means and Smith (1994) explore progression through "degrees of empowerment" (p81; also Hoyes et al 1993 p9). Kernaghan (1992) talks of a "multi-stage progression" (p198), and Hall (1992) notes that empowerment "tends to follow certain sequences and stages" (p89). Kieffer (1984) outlines an "empowering evolution" (p20) of "ordered and progressive development" through four "distinct phases" or "eras" (p17).

Other writers are more indirect. For example Kirkpatrick's (1992 p31) questioning of "How much empowerment is the right amount?" suggests it can be halted at specific stages, whilst Servian's (1996) finding that "users appeared to have to go to greater lengths [than workers] to become empowered" (p37) again describes an incremental process (whereby users start several steps behind).

Table 7 below illustrates ten conceptualisations of empowerment from the literature. These represent both cyclical and laddered approaches, and map both individual progression and collective movement. Note that identifying steps and stages is not unique to conceptualisations of empowerment, also being identified within hierarchies of need¹ and theories of community development.

Table 7: Selected Theorists' Steps and Stages in Empowerment

Ahlquist (1997)		Beresford & Croft ('93)	Freire (1972a)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing awareness • Developing skills in empowering • Developing a process specific to what is to be achieved • Agreeing criteria for success • Monitoring, adapting and developing • Reaching agreed goals 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing our own accounts • Forming our own judgements • Negotiating with others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigating • Evaluating • Codifying • Presenting • Analysing & decoding • Externalising • Further decoding • Preparation of materials
Kieffer (1984)		Mathis & Richan (1986)	Stewart & Taylor (1995)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Era of Entry: initial exploratory participation spurred by personal need (Early childhood) • Era of Advancement: developing peer relations & critical understanding (Later childhood) • Era of Incorporation: deepening new critical relationship to wider world (Adolescence) • Era of Commitment: Ongoing commitment and changed values and priorities (Adulthood) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conscientization • Collective action • Exercising power in the decision process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence building • Engaging in and managing services • Taking part in partnership • Claiming access to basic rights
Rees (1991)	Rose and Black (1985)	Rosenfled (1989)	Zimmerman (1990a)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding themes • Evaluating self-image & knowledge • Specifying problems • Developing awareness of policies • Developing the notion of choice • Experiencing solidarity with others • Acquiring and using language • Resisting a return to powerlessness • Developing political skills • Evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verstehen (understanding) • Thematisation • Problematisation • Anomie • Analysing • Decision-making • Action • Evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing credibility • Acting as partners • Discovering • Searching • Unveiling • Maintaining the focus • Developing consent • Transferring goods/ talents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiencing control • Perception of control • Causal attribution of successful control • Future expectations of being in control • Learned hopefulness

Sources: Freire, Rose and Black and Rosenfled as summarised in Figure 8.1 in Rees 1991 (p88), Other references as listed.

¹ Such as Maslow's (1943) hierarchy, discussed in (4.1) Preconditions for Empowerment (Meeting Immediate Presenting Need, pp166-9).

This research confirmed that empowerment is commonly conceptualised as "an incremental thing" (FCLD Interview), consisting of "stepping stones" (DCHP Document²), "certain stations on the way" (FCLD Interview), "different levels" (FCLD Interview) and "building blocks" (SW&H Interview).

Such conceptualisations have clear uses in practice, enabling users to control and authorise "each step" of the process (Rose and Black 1985) whilst also guiding practice. As one commentator noted, "Unless workers have in their head key stages ... they simply drift from ... today to the next day" (SYAP Interview). Named steps or stages also outline ideal patterns of progression, or as the SAMH Advocacy and Empowerment Group evaluation noted:

"People now state they work as a group and do not want individual members to race ahead. The aim is for all to move forward together, even if this means waiting for everyone to learn the skills needed for the next stage" (SAMH Document³).

Commentators used various images and analogies in their discussions of empowerment as incremental, from linear models to mountain ranges, "a pyramid" (EP Interview), rollercoasters of "dips and highs and dips and highs" (FCLD Interview) and circles or spirals. This latter cyclical conceptualisation was especially prominent:

"I think it's a cycle - finding out what is the issues or the problems, and then talking about it; and then action; then results; and then going back. It's a circle going round and round and round" (SYAP Interview).

Stewart and Taylor (1995) conversely characterise disempowerment as a cycle of isolation, dependency, marginalisation and exclusion which empowerment-based initiatives must reverse, whilst Marris and Rein (1972) similarly claim powerlessness is "circular: without power, you will not be heard; but until you are heard, you cannot influence the basis of consent to the power you seek" (p363).

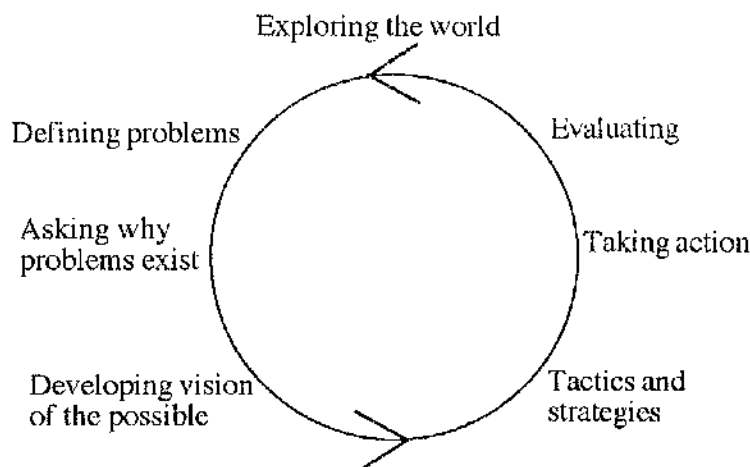
Such cycles reflect a classic pattern, perhaps most influentially promoted by Paulo Freire (1972a; 1972b), whose notion of "praxis" - a circular process of reflection, understanding and action - has heavily influenced community development theory and practice (Ahlquist 1997; Pinderhughes 1983). Such cyclical models were commonly identified within the projects, for example where "the empowerment process is a circular rather than a linear one so ongoing support, training and access to information

² Staff worker quoted in Kennedy, Aine; Tannahill, Carol and Curtice, Lisa (1993) Evaluating 'Health for All' Practice at Community Level: The Drumchapel Healthy Cities Project.

³ McCollam, Allyson (1994) SAMH Advocacy Training Group: Evaluation of the Group August '93 - February '94.

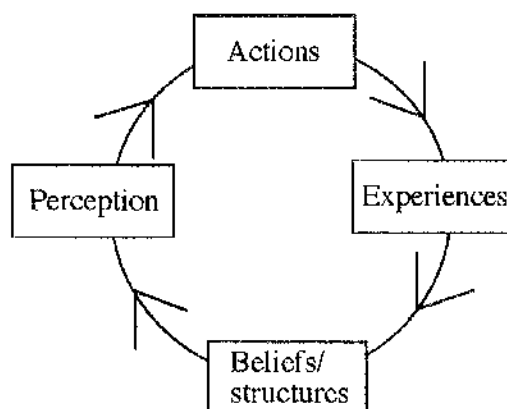
are necessary" (DCHP Document⁴). Some projects had themselves graphically mapped such cycles, such as Stirling Youth Action Project, illustrated in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Stirling Youth Action Project's Model of Empowerment (SYAP Document⁵)



This model was used both to direct practice and to map out an ideal route of progression. Although one-dimensional here, in practice this represented a spiral movement, with users exploring their own personal world, taking action and evaluating their personal lives, before following the same circular process with their group, their neighbourhoods, their wider communities, and so on. The Foundation for Community Leadership Development also mapped its own circular model of empowerment, shown in Figure 8. This model is clearly influenced by Freire, whereby thoughts (perception) and practice (action) repeatedly interact.

Figure 8: Foundation for Community Leadership Development's Model of Empowerment (FCLD Interview)



⁴ Kennedy, Aine (1994) Practising 'Health for All' in a Glasgow Housing Scheme The Drunchapel Healthy Cities Project 1990-92.

⁵ From Stirling Youth Action Project presentation materials developed by Frances Callaghan, Director.

Conceptualisations of steps and stages were not universally supported however, with three particular areas of criticism. First, some commentators claimed that defining a set pattern of empowerment overrules individual agency, whereby each person influences their own process:

"I think everybody's path is quite different, because of their confidence levels, because of their knowledge base, because of their skills base" (LCDP Interview).

Second, the identification of specific stages in effect disempowers, by seeking to normalise or standardise diverse practice:

"I think there are activities that serve as markers of increasing empowerment ... There are stages, but what they are must vary. ... For a long time I wrestled with the idea that I ought to be clearer about that, ... but in fact that was counter-productive to empowerment. Again it's trying to impose a structure that you consider normal or appropriate" (FCLD Interview).

Finally, critics claimed empowerment is less predictable than named steps or stages suggest, thus generalisation is misleading and mechanistic. This is supported by Age Concern Scotland's (1995) recommendation that agencies working with empowerment have to "be prepared to start everywhere at once and 'go with it'" (p6), painting a fairly chaotic (and perhaps more realistic) notion of empowerment in practice. As Colenutt and Cutten (1994) argue, standardised 'cookbook' approaches to empowerment have serious flaws:⁶

"To simply assert that by following the principles of x, y and z will lead to empowerment within all communities would be a complete fallacy: each community will reach a different level of empowerment over time" (pp246-7).

Bearing in mind such criticisms or warnings is helpful here. The identification of steps or stages is useful in unpacking empowerment's component parts, but clearly individuals may follow different paths. Thus rather than being either mutually exclusive or "some mechanical scheme to be rigidly followed" (Rees 1991 p87), this chapter represents steps and stages as interrelated elements within a complex concept:

"Empowerment ... makes possible the journey from our own personal needs to influencing and changing attitudes, values, policy and practice that affect them, it has several constituents. They aren't separate steps or stages, but overlapping elements" (Beresford and Croft 1993 p131).

As noted in the introduction, this research identified four broad steps in empowerment: personal development, in particular the growth of confidence and

⁶ Limitations of 'cookbook' approaches to empowerment are discussed more fully in the Introduction to this thesis (pp10-17).

'voice'; social development, involving shifts towards service and action; political development, or conscientisation; and moving on from projects, raising the question of empowerment's transferability over time and place. Each of these are now discussed in turn, before discussing the prospect of empowerment reversal, or rather steps backwards rather than forward.

Personal Development: Confidence and 'Voice'

"When you've got the confidence, you've got it, haven't you? That's one thing that I got out of Second Chance. When I started it was hard for me to stand up and speak, right? But I had to stand up and speak. At the beginning it was hard, ... but once you started, you can talk anywhere now, it doesn't matter" (SCL Interview).

Personal development, or "growing as a person" (SCL Interview), is widely identified as the first step in empowerment, embodying increases in confidence and 'voice'. Freire (1972a) notes that powerless people (the oppressed) commonly lack confidence due to persistent domination and persecution by the powerful (the oppressors). Lerner's (1986) theory of "surplus powerlessness" similarly contends that structural powerlessness is exacerbated within individuals by self-perceptions of failure and hopelessness. Thus gaining confidence and self-respect forms an early and critical step in empowerment (Ingram 1988).

Projects supported the claim that "Empowerment should represent a process of personal growth" (Barnes and Walker 1996 p380), describing the development of confidence and self-esteem as "the starting blocks for people" (SW&H Interview) which, in "giving people a sense of value" (FCLD Interview), encourage further involvement and personal growth. Note that this was not merely a professional analysis, with project users and volunteers commonly identifying this first and critical step, beyond which "there's no stopping people!" (DCHP Interview).

A particular component of increased confidence was identified as speaking out, or "being able to voice what you want" (DCHP Interview). Again here this interpretation was as prominent amongst users and volunteers as other participants, who claimed "once you've got the confidence to talk ... the sky's the limit" (DCHP Interview):

"In the committee at the start I probably would have sat there saying nothing. I would have just sat and listened to what was getting said, but not said anything. But now I'll get my tuppence worth. If I feel there's a point to get over, I'll put that point over" (SW&H Interview).

Speaking out appears to be an incremental process in itself, from users first expressing their needs and opinions to other individual users, and only then to (in turn) larger user groups, project workers, and more formal settings, such as management committees:

"Once they've done it once then they're prepared to talk again. ... I don't expect a woman to come off the street and come to her first management committee and say, 'Well I think ...', because they won't do that" (SW&H Interview).

Beyond this, participants noted users beginning to speak out with their own projects and communities within less protected, potentially more threatening environments. For example when Second Chance Learning's local history class spoke at a national oral history conference hosted in the town, their movement "onto another stage, out of here" (SCL Interview) was deemed a critical stage.

Whilst there is widespread recognition that users must be "enabled to find their voice" (SYAP Document⁷) and of "effective voice as being the first step in empowerment", some argue that more critical is whether professionals listen (Heginbotham 1992 p12) and whether participative structures offer ongoing meaningful involvement (Martin 1996). The Empowerment Project experienced significant difficulties here both in ensuring patients had a voice and that professionals listened. For example they organised an in-depth, qualitative survey of patients' views of life on the ward, aiming to balance official, quantitative patient surveys, whose findings of overall satisfaction contradicted the project's own experiences. Whilst the use of direct quotations in the survey report intended to strengthen the rarely heard patient voice (EP Document⁸), ward staff and managers responded to expressions of dissatisfaction (for example around the limited choice of clothing, food and activities) with claims that the quotes were "made up" (EP Fieldnotes). This attempt to develop patients' voice arguably left them with less voice than ever before.

Although there was less certainty about subsequent steps beyond confidence-building, there was widespread agreement that this initial stage was crucial and necessarily preceded social or political levels of empowerment. Thus "I think the first stage has got to be the person. ... That's where you have to start" (SCL Interview):

"No amount of information or skill acquisition will help someone who is conflicted as to their role, who lacks self-esteem and confidence and who has significant unexplored beliefs about themselves that limit them in what they can achieve in any given situation" (FCLD Document⁹).

⁷ Stirling Youth Action Project (1993) Annual Review '93: a positive approach to young people.

⁸ Murray, Justina (1994) The Empowerment Project Baseline Research Report.

⁹ Foundation for Community Leadership Development (1989) Urban Aid Application.

Social Development: Service and Action

"The process is a slow one but as young people's confidence in themselves develops, they can become actively involved in the decision-making process and ... in partnership with adults exert their influence to achieve real change within their community" (SYAP Document¹⁰).

Although there was less consensus on subsequent stages, there was widespread agreement that these involved a shift "from insight to action" (Rowlands 1995 p103), or rather from individual issues towards service and action.

During this stage users reportedly assume greater responsibility for their own involvement; develop or propose services or resources for others' benefit as much as their own; and make more realistic demands on projects for support. It is here that groups most commonly propose ending contact with paid workers and other formal support. The critical step here is the realisation or "enlightenment" (DCHP Interview) of oneself as a causal force. In this way Drumchapel Community Health Project noted that their community health volunteers progressed from a "medicalised and fatalistic" view of health to a more sophisticated, analytical interpretation, characterised by an interest in complimentary therapies and a "sense of control" over their own health (DCHP Document¹¹).

Although this second step appears relatively straightforward, some projects felt unable to progress empowerment even this far. For example the SAMH Advocacy and Empowerment Group's time limitations restricted their involvement to personal development stages, as confidence and self-esteem were so slowly developed (SAMH Fieldnotes). In other projects too individuals seemed to become stuck at certain stages, although they themselves were not always held responsible, with project workers also blamed for encouraging dependency:

"We were almost five years down the line and it was the same women we were working with all the time. I thought empowerment would mean that you start off something that has a kind of beginning, a middle, and then you see these women going off to other things. And I kept thinking to myself, that's not what we're doing" (SW&H Interview).

Such a slowing of progression was particularly noted once early victories were secured, making momentum harder to maintain. Clearly the identification of steps and stages does not guarantee movement through them:

¹⁰ Frances Callaghan (1993) Stirling Youth Action Project Progress Report 28/4/93.

¹¹ Kennedy, Aine (1994) Practising 'Health for All' in a Glasgow Housing Scheme: The Drumchapel Healthy Cities Project 1990-1992.

"We had a static period for quite some time. At the cosy comfortable stage, we weren't empowering people. You know when you climb a mountain, you've arrived, and then you look and there's all the other ones, and you think 'Oh God! Here we go again!' It's quite nice to stop and not move on, for everybody. ... We did hit a bit where you could see we were no longer pushing to move on." (SCL Interview).

Political Development: Conscientisation

"Personal skills without socio-political consciousness and knowledge are of only limited use. ... The empowerment of young people will occur only if they can develop their individual skill alongside a critical social knowledge" (Burrage 1991 p41)

This third step of political development is more commonly termed "conscientization" (Freire 1972a; 1972b) or "consciousness-raising" (Evans 1992; Ward and Mullender 1991), as individuals move from a stage of passively accepting the status quo to critically reflecting, analysing, questioning, and ultimately initiating socio-political action:

"The term 'conscientization' refers to learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire 1972a p21).

Just as the steps of personal and social development are conceptualised as multi-stage in themselves, political development contains several inter-related components.

First is the step of recognising and harnessing indigenous skills and resources to effect change (Breton 1989), echoing the earlier point that users are not powerless but rather have different kinds of power.¹² Second, personal situations are linked with wider forces, connecting the personal and political. Thus whilst social development involves recognising oneself as causal, political development also acknowledges wider forces as influential (Mathis and Richan 1986; Riessman 1986). This recognition of one's own situation in others, and consequently acknowledging the need for social change, is the crux of conscientization (Breton 1989). This shift was repeatedly identified within projects, for example in a Drumchapel Community Health Volunteer who recalled that "before joining the Project he did not have a 'political mind'" (DCHP Document¹³), and a Second Chance Learning student:

"She'll come in and say, 'I see in the local paper the Council are doing such and such', ... something that four years ago she wouldn't have known the least about. ... She wouldn't ever have read the paper. ... That kind of story is repeated a dozen times in my knowledge" (SCL Interview).

¹² See (4.2) Bases of Power: Resources for Empowerment (Developing Indigenous Resources, p189).

¹³ Drumchapel Community Health Project (1993) Development Worker's Report January 1993.

This shift was graphically and insightfully described by one commentator as a room (representing the project) with numerous doors (representing users' paths in). Only on entering the room do users realise their personal concerns have wider links:

"You can think about it [empowerment] like a room. There are lots of different doors into the room. Once you get into the room, the set of issues you deal with are the same. ... What we tried to do was kind of encourage them to think about how their particular issue was related to a wider set of issues and a wider set of people and a wider set of organisations - not to make each individual volunteer take more and more responsibility, but just so that they knew that their issue wasn't occurring in a vacuum" (DCHP Interview).

The third step in conscientisation links critical thought with a willingness to act (Gibson 1991). For example Second Chance Learning's students were seen to move from unquestioningly absorbing information to entering into dialogue with others and interrogating information. Thus "it's a total process of changing consciousness that we're talking about" (SCL Document¹⁴):

"My ideal would be to get everybody to critically think again. That's the key for me. It's not just about criticising staff, it's about criticising everything that's around you. ... If we encourage people to think about things in a critical manner, and explore things for themselves, that's what it's all about. ... Too bad if it upsets people! That's the whole point - they're thinking for themselves" (SCL Interview).

Finally here conscientisation involves a shift from being passive recipients of services to active subjects who shape service content and delivery. This Freirean concept of passivity and activity is frequently discussed within the literature (Kieffer 1984; Mondros and Wilson 1994; Rees 1991; Rose and Black 1985), although Freire's (1972a) own interpretation is perhaps most memorable:

"Attempting to liberate the oppressed without their reflective participation in the act of liberation is to treat them as objects which must be saved from a burning building; it is to lead them into the populist pitfall and transform them into masses which can be manipulated" (p41).

This transformation from passive unquestioning objects to subjects who actively and critically examine their world underpins the Foundation for Community Leadership Development's aim of teaching "third person orientation" (FCLD Document¹⁵), a stance from which individuals can objectively and critically assess their own situation, as well as others'. FCLD aimed for participants:

"to become initiators and managers of change rather than its victims or passive beneficiaries. ... [and] to learn how to make a profound shift in life orientation from reacting to what comes up, whether it be in the form

¹⁴ Second Chance Learning (1993) Evaluation.

¹⁵ Foundation for Community Leadership Development (1989) Urban Aid Application.

of threats or opportunities, to creating what they truly want" (FCLD Document 16).

Despite the widespread view that conscientisation is a superior step in empowerment to personal or social development, there are voices of dissent. For example Labonte (1991) criticises the assumption that personal empowerment is simply a step on the way to political empowerment, for reflecting professionals' rather than users' belief that all individuals seek full responsibility and control. Similarly this commentator questioned:

"It's all a case of what you mean by empowerment. I really don't think empowerment is about big life decisions. It's about choosing whether you want milk and sugar in your tea" (SAMH Interview).

There are echoes here of earlier discussions on the importance of users' receptiveness to empowerment,¹⁷ and on users' decisions not to participate in all types of involvement.¹⁸ There is clearly "quite a hard balance to strike" (EP Interview) between pushing for progress through stages of empowerment and being sensitive to individual preferences and capabilities.

Moving On: Empowerment Transfer

"... it must be recognised that empowering individuals within organisations ... is likely to lead to a greater measure of external empowerment" (Kernaghan 1992 p196).

Following these three steps of personal, social and political development, is a fourth step of moving on, raising the question of transferring experiences of empowerment outwith projects. Indeed the usefulness of empowerment-based initiatives is surely limited if their empowerment is not transferable to other times, contexts or locations.

The literature is not particularly optimistic here. For example Hendry and Craik (1991 in McConnell 1996) found increases in young people's self-confidence, social skills and expectations were generally not transferred beyond youth work programmes to adulthood. Barnes and Walker (1996) warn that whilst frail older people may be empowered through individual care packages, this "does not mean they will be powerful with regard to other social relations and institutions" (p380). Yet clearly a

¹⁶ Foundation for Community Leadership Development(1989) Urban Aid Application.

¹⁷ See (4.1) Preconditions for Empowerment (Receptiveness to Empowerment, pp169-70).

¹⁸ As discussed in (3.3) Types of Involvement (6. Representation and Management, Who Wants People Power? pp155-7).

central aim of empowerment is "to increase people's abilities to take control of their lives as a whole, not just increase their influence over services" (p381).

Transferable Elements of Empowerment

"They can take into another organisation their ability to contribute to a discussion, they can take their knowledge, ... they can take their skills with them, and they can take their experience of having been marginalised and going through a process of distancing themselves from that marginalisation and being empowered" (LCDP Interview).

Commentators did not always specify which elements of empowerment could be transferred, beyond the fact that "something is bound to stay with you" (SAMH Interview) or "it's something that you want to keep with you in every part of what you do" (SYAP Interview). This broad transferability reportedly makes empowerment "liberating" (SYAP Interview), with one commentator drawing parallels with portable pensions, carried freely as individual property from job to job.

More specifically, transferable elements are identified first as "a state of mind", "a belief in yourself" (SYAP Interview) or "a passion ... you take with you" (SAMH Interview). Consequently participants approach future ventures "with more confidence to start something new" (DCHP Interview). Such elements support Barnes and Walker's (1996) identification of empowerment as positive experiences of valuing one's views and opinions, confidence to speak out, and a belief that one can contribute to change. Thus:

"If you work in an empowering way or are well versed in empowerment, then that would colour what you do and how you do it in whatever you are doing. It involves a lot of things that are transferable; how you use your personal skills, how you feel about yourself" (FCLD Interview).

Second are more specific and concrete "by-products of empowerment" (DCHP Interview), including "things like experience and skills" (DCHP Interview). Information and "know-how" (SW&H Interview) were also commonly noted here. A final transferable element was a sense of justice, "a feeling that you have a right" (LCDP Interview), and "you deserve that respect" (SAMH Interview). In this way one member of the Lothian Coalition of Disabled People claimed increased knowledge and confidence allowed her to challenge her employers for the first time about their discriminatory practice (LCDP Interview).

Transferring to Where?

"... there are limitations, as well as powers. What are the limits of empowerment in one sphere of life as opposed to others? What spheres of empowerment lead to generalization such that empowerment becomes a way of being in the world?" (Rappaport 1987 pp129-130).

Kernaghan (1992) claims that "real power" can only be exercised outwith individual organisations (p196), suggesting empowerment practice must reach beyond participation in single projects. If participants are not able to apply their project-based empowerment to other settings, how empowered are they? Transferability in itself thus acts as a test of empowerment:

"The test will be in these folk that have become empowered through going on courses. Does it transform their personal lives? To become a conference groupie for the rest of your life is not a transformation" (FCLD Interview).

This research identified five locations to which users transferred their empowerment. First, within projects, users transfer empowerment gained within one group to other groups or events. Notably here, and contrary to Kernaghan's claim, transferability does not necessarily involve leaving projects. For example those Second Chance Learning students who did not move on to further work or study transferred empowerment through becoming management committee members or community tutors. Second, gains in confidence and assertiveness bring "a readiness to look out and see things differently and see relationships differently" (SCL Interview) within family or personal lives. Thus users and volunteers leave "questionable" (DCHP Interview) or violent relationships, or more generally begin "challenging their own basic lifestyle, the family lifestyle they have" (SCL Interview):

"We want all these women to come in but be able to go out different - not go out and end up getting battered by their men 'cos they'll not put their tea on the table, and stuff like that" (SW&H Interview).

Third, users transfer their empowerment to spheres of education, training or employment, for example shifting career direction or retraining. Some projects directly aimed for such progression, such as Second Chance Learning which offered varied work-related certificated and accredited courses:

"That's what's seen as education and learning, and that's what we should be doing - progressing people. ... People have got to get on and get in there. Strone has got to have people getting jobs and getting training" (SCL Interview).

Fourth, empowerment is transferred when users begin to deliver services outwith projects. Examples here include the SAMH Advocacy and Empowerment Group

training student nurses in mental health and advocacy issues,¹⁹ and Drumchapel Community Health Project's volunteers training other initiatives' voluntary workers. Importantly here, users retain their projects' support and backup whilst still being enabled to transfer their empowerment elsewhere. Finally, empowerment is transferred to more formal spheres, such as public agencies and other service providers. Commonly users began to confront or challenge authority, becoming more able to advocate for themselves in the face of professional opinion:

"You see people going to other professionals and standing up for themselves - not being browbeaten at the doctors, not being browbeaten at the social security" (SCL Interview).

Blocking Empowerment Transfer

"It's difficult for folk going to a job or another opportunity. We've had a lot of difficulty here with people going on to something - maybe the college has taken them on and they've got seventeen modules or done a lot of things, and they come back here, or they do a degree course, and they come back here. I say, 'Well, I'm afraid we've nothing much left for you here, you know', and they don't like that. They say, 'There's no place for me any longer'" (SCL Interview).

Despite these many transferable elements and locations of empowerment, transfer was clearly blocked in some cases. For example several SAMH Advocacy and Empowerment trainees (all of whom were current or former mental health service users), remained doubtful that they would openly challenge medical authority if re-admitted to an institutional setting. In other cases transferring empowerment seemed impossible beyond the immediacy of the family or home, as other participative mechanisms and opportunities were so limited. For example Second Chance Learning remained the only accessible, family-friendly, informal education provision locally, leaving little incentive to move on (SCL Interviews and Document²⁰), whilst opportunities to transfer new skills and abilities to the marketplace were equally limited:

"I've gained a lot. I actually see all these things we've done. I mean all these wages contracts that we've done and things to do with management. I could actually put into use, but you don't get the chance, you don't get the job to put it into use" (SCL Interview).

This means "people ripe for the picking and ready to move on" (SW&H Interview) remain stuck within projects "in a dependent state ..., so where is the empowerment in that?" (SCL Interview). To limit this risk, some tried to discourage users or volunteers

¹⁹ The overall lack of training opportunities for this Group was discussed in (4.2) Bases of Power: Resources for Empowerment (Developing Indigenous Resources, p191).

²⁰ Second Chance Learning Management Minutes 17.6.91.

from believing "they were getting helped because they had somewhere to go" (DCHP Interview), and using projects simply as "comfortable" (SCL Interview) and "eternally cosy" (SCL Interview) social bases. Workers claimed they had to "push them [users] out the door ... to see if they can go it alone" (SW&H Interview), although an initial period of dependency was recognised as part of the empowerment process (DCHP Interview). Moving on was clearly more of an issue for workers than volunteers or users, who (in addition to perhaps wanting to be eternally cosy) believed they had a responsibility to stay and pass on their skills and experiences to newer recruits:

"I don't want to come away from Second Chance. I feel kind of loyal to it. It's like a family environment. Should I make the break? I feel I've got a lot to offer other people. I got a lot out of it, and I can put back into it what I received" (SCL Interview).

In addition, projects themselves could gain from long-term retention of users. Whilst a high user turnover acts as one indicator of empowerment, funders commonly seek evidence of high user numbers, bringing a constant (and a somewhat perverse) pressure to discourage movement and retain enough "bums on seats" (in SW&H Fieldnotes) to satisfy funders, management committees and others.²¹ This situation was exacerbated by the lack of resources to replace those experienced and committed volunteers and users who did leave:

"Increasingly you see people moving out of an area, and in a sense they take their skills, their leadership, their resources with them. And that then leaves other folk who have not been so involved, and so things can stop because of that. ... A lot of folk who were initially involved with setting up Second Chance took training got jobs, moved out of the area. ... And that does affect what's going on, it definitely does" (SCL Interview).

Empowerment Reversal

"The processes of empowerment may cover the story of a lifetime. ... That process is not straightforward. Two steps forward might be followed by one step back. One step forward by two steps back" (Rees 1991 p86).

It follows that if empowerment can progress through different steps and stages, it can also move backwards, or be reversed. Indeed the whole concept of disempowerment clearly suggests that a state of empowerment can be taken away or undone. To explore this issue in practice, the commentators were asked whether they believed empowerment reversal could occur, and if so with what causes and effects.

²¹ The issue of user numbers was discussed further in (3.3) Types of Involvement (7. Passive and Non-Involvement, pp157-62).

The literature identifies the risk of empowerment reversal by portraying empowerment as a far from constant state. For example Fawcett et al (1994) suggest "levels of empowerment may ... vary across the lifespan" (p475), whilst Myers (1995) also claims empowerment is a fluctuating state whereby disempowered older people can follow "a positive spiral of reempowerment" (p111). Within Rees' (1991) ten stages in achieving power is an eighth of "resisting a return to powerlessness" (p89), once more suggesting the maintenance of a specific level of empowerment is not guaranteed.

Amongst the commentators, empowerment reversal was perceived as a continual threat, whereby participants face a "constant battle to remain empowered" (EP Interview) and avoid "slippage back" (FCLD Interview). In noting that empowerment "can go back quicker than it can go forward" (EP Interview), reversal risks returning individuals to even greater powerlessness than before.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, lengthy processes of empowerment were believed to reduce the threat of reversal. In part this came from increased chances of individuals experiencing "transforming incidents from which people never go back" (LCDP Interview)", such as successfully challenging powerholders for the first time, positively experiencing power-holding (for example through chairing meetings or speaking at conferences), or making radical changes in one's personal life. Commentators argued that subsequent reversal could still happen, but never to previous extents. In addition, lengthier processes built participants' practical experience of power relations, resulting in a more critical understanding of how empowerment (and its reverse) operate:

"In relation to the management committee, you can see it getting disempowered sometimes by the 'powers that be'. But they know they're getting disempowered. So if they know they're being disempowered, that's not really being disempowered!" (SCL Interview).

Causes of Empowerment Reversal

Causes of disempowerment may indeed be easier to identify than those of empowerment (Scottish Users' Conference 1992), and are only briefly outlined here.²² These include first personal poverty and "crises" (DCHP Interview), where "real life intervenes and people's personal life takes over" (DCHP Interview). Second, ever-changing structures and staffing were identified as reversing empowerment by creating anxiety, stress and practical difficulties. Third are funding shortages,

²² Given that many reflect barriers discussed earlier in (4.3) Blocks and Barriers in Empowerment (pp196-211).

although some claim ongoing formal funding undermines empowerment by ensuring individuals and communities remain dependent:

"I think there will always be a need for external help from time to time, but there's a part of me that would feel that ... we'd failed in setting up self-sustaining processes if we had to continually go back and plug in a new set of batteries" (FCLD Interview).

The fourth cause of reversal is the continuing inaccessibility of power resources by user groups. For example one of Stirling Youth Action Project's local action groups secured access to their community centre for weekly meetings, eventually overcoming the resistance of the centre's all-adult management committee. However when the centre closed for redevelopment the group were left homeless and eventually dissolved after numerous failed attempts to secure alternative accommodation. Fifth and finally, empowerment reversal was linked to users' dashed expectations, for example "if you had the same experience again and came against the same people and weren't able to do anything about it" (SAMH Interview).

Avoiding Reversal = Avoiding Empowerment?

"You either go and try and change things and they're blocked, or you don't even attempt to change things because you know they'll be blocked. I think that totally sets the process back in reverse. ... To be bluntly honest, I believe that's happened" (EP Interview).

This research supports the claim that empowerment can be reversed, however this raises a critical tension between attempting empowerment and accepting this potential for reversal, or avoiding empowerment and its associated risks altogether.

As noted earlier, a fear of risk-taking can be identified as blocking empowerment practice,²³ with commentators reporting instances of nervous workers clinging to power or rapidly seizing power back from users when difficulties arise. Whilst Dyer (1994) warns that workers should not be threatened when users go it alone, she notes they may in fact resent users' freedom to make their own mistakes. The commentators also noted that the risks of user empowerment offer workers both an opportunity and threat:

"You need to allow disabled people to fail when you're doing things, as well as succeed. ... You might get, say, professional people expecting others to fail or hoping they'll fail, so that they can come back in" (LCDP Interview).

²³ See (4.3) Blocks and Barriers to Empowerment ("Hitting Your Head Off a Brick Wall": Failing to Effect Change, Watching Your Back: Fear of Risk-Taking, pp202-3).

Indeed empowerment may inherently involves "hiccups" (FCLD Interview), "fits and starts" or "knockbacks" (FCLD Interview), with these lower points at times (usually retrospectively) identified as evidence of further progress rather than disempowerment. For example group or project burnout was characterised as both a failure and a successful recognition of ineffectiveness or a natural lifespan ending. This supports Kirkpatrick's (1992) view that failures do not necessarily reverse empowerment and can be learning experiences, although he warns some can have more serious consequences. Freire (1972a; 1972b) also claims the powerless have rational fears of "liberation", as struggles with the powerful carry the risk of even greater repression, whilst Rees (1991) recommends users should be supported to make demands yet protected from the repercussions:

"Assertiveness might have brought rewards to practitioners but for clients it may have provoked punishment. ... Giving permission to develop new roles is not always accompanied by the protection to do so" (p96).

Clearly users risk most through empowerment's potential reversal, particularly where they have been encouraged to adopt a more critical perception of themselves and their lives, and where projects can only offer "a short-term boost in the arm" (FCLD Interview) without ongoing support:

"I think people do say they'll make a commitment, then something very practical will happen in their lives or they'll just take cold feet 'cos they're terrified about what faces them. They've never been encouraged to see anything different as something they could benefit from, you know? Staying with the same seems safe" (SCL Interview).

Yet despite all of these claims and concerns, there was a view that 'genuine' empowerment cannot be reversed, even with the removal of concrete resources and support:

"I think you can't disempower. ... You can take away from them a community centre they've worked hard to fight for. You can do it in practical terms. But in real terms you can't take away an experience somebody's had. They'll always refer back to that experience. ... So I suppose you could go back to the old circumstances, and your behaviour may revert, but I think your attitude must be changed irrevocably" (FCLD Interview).

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the way in which empowerment is commonly conceptualised as a series of overarching steps and stages. These include personal development, involving building confidence and finding one's voice; social development, where users look outwards towards service and action as they sense individual causation and control; and political development, or conscientisation,

which involves linking personal and political spheres, developing critical thought and shifting from passive objectivity to active subjectivity. Finally is a stage of moving on and transferring empowerment elsewhere, although there appear to be limited elements and locations for such transfer.

Whilst these key stages largely echo those identified within the literature, this research offers new insight, in particular illustrating that movement through stages of empowerment is far from mechanistic, with individuals and groups becoming stuck, skipping stages or going in several directions at once. Ladder-like theoretical models of steps and stages offer particularly inadequate representation of this less than ordered reality, although circular models better represent individuals missing stages and returning later, or indeed repeating stages. However even these models tend to be unidirectional, failing to explain empowerment reversal as discussed at the end of this chapter.

Overall, the conceptualisation of empowerment as a series of steps and stages is helpful in breaking down the complexities of practice into component parts, making practice seem more 'doable'. However this should not suggest automatic movement through each stage, nor suggest that each step is the same height or depth for all participants. In addition, maintenance beyond specific steps and stages is far from guaranteed, with reversal seeming inevitable if one accepts the risks of empowerment.

5.3 THE DYNAMICS OF EMPOWERMENT

Introduction

"Empowerment ... is a dynamic; it is both taken and given. ... It is the dynamic that is of crucial importance in understanding empowerment" (Hess 1984 p228).

The dynamics of empowerment represent different movements of power within empowerment relations. These differences are more than a "simple linguistic nuance", being critical to empowerment theory and practice. Dynamics of empowerment are frequently discussed within the literature (Simon 1990 p32). For example Carabine (1996) interprets empowerment as a "dynamic" which is "constantly and continually negotiated" (p27), whilst Labonte (1991) claims that "empowerment exists as a shifting or dynamic quality of power relations between two or more persons" (p16). Such dynamism suggests that power relationships are not fixed, and empowerment is ever-shifting rather than static.

In this research, five dynamics of empowerment were identified and explored: giving, giving up, seizing, sharing and awakening power. Crucially, these are not mutually exclusive and more typically co-exist in practice. Whilst the empowerment literature represents all five, individual writers tend to restrict definition and discussion to selected dynamics. For example Means et al (1993) argue that empowerment means "taking or being given more power" (p15), whilst Strathclyde Regional Council (1993) claim that agencies must be prepared "to give up some of their power and to share it with, or transfer it to, communities" (Topic Sheet 1), and Clarke and Stewart (1992b) note that "to empower means giving or sharing" (p1; also Gibson 1991). Staples (1990) is the exception here in giving a broader interpretation of empowerment as "the process by which power is gained, developed, seized, facilitated or given" (p29). This research's more comprehensive approach is therefore relatively rare.

Throughout this thesis, the complex relationship between participants' perceptions, expectations and practices around empowerment has been continually explored. This chapter provides a further illustration of these links, in that individuals' understanding of power relationships undoubtedly impacts upon their expectations of empowerment's consequences, and thus upon their practice. Conflict around what

empowerment means for power relations arguably compounds contradictions within individual dynamics (Labonte 1991).

The five dynamics are now defined and critically explored, outlining key characteristics and limitations of each, and concluding that the strongest practice uses a combined approach.

Empowerment as Giving Power

"Virtually all empowerment efforts involve a grant of power by a favoured group to others" (Gruber and Trickett 1987 p370).

The perception of empowerment as a gift of power embodies a concrete and zero sum interpretation whereby in giving, the donor inherently loses power. This view of empowerment as the powerful "giving power away" (SW&H Document¹) is well represented in the literature, through such claims as "the difficult part is to give up some of our power as professionals" (Breton 1989 p13), and "giving more power to users over decisions ... probably involves taking power away from service providers" (Taylor et al 1992 p3). These zero sum conceptualisations help explain why powerful individuals and groups may resist empowerment. For example the Empowerment Project found nursing staff did not believe their claim that empowerment is a 'win-win' scenario, instead worrying that what little power they had would be lost. Others supported this view:

"It's [empowerment's] a bit like giving over some of your power, and this is very difficult for some people. And that's the crux of empowerment, that you hand over some power" (SCL Interview).

Labonte (1991) explains here that the verb 'to empower' "has a split personality" (p16) as both transitive and intransitive, in that giving power is relational, whilst gaining or obtaining power is reflexive. The difficulty with relational empowerment is that the empowerer remains in control, yet as Baistow (1994) notes this is a highly prominent dynamic:

"My reading of current empowerment discourses indicates that the verb 'to empower' has lost its reflexive meaning: empowerment is something that is done to you by others, or that you do to others who thus become empowered by your actions not their own" (p37).

The terminology of giving may therefore be somewhat misleading in suggesting generosity, when in effect strictly unilateral power relationships are maintained. Thus

¹ Stirling Women and Health Project (1995) Mission Statement.

the powerful remain paternalistic and colonising (Breton 1989) whilst recipients retain a sense of obligation and responsibility. Project users were particularly critical of this dynamic for continuing to promote passivity amongst those who have a long history of being 'done to', and who take time to understand that empowerment means "enabling them, not doing it for them" (SYAP Interview). In addition, what can be given can be just as quickly removed, as one commentator noted in terms of user-led initiatives' success or failure:

"One of the classic things about empowerment, or letting people make their own choices, their own decisions, is like 'Yes, we'll let them do that but if it works, we'll take the credit and if it doesn't work we'll just blame them anyway" (EP Interview).

Gruber and Trickett (1987) usefully identify "the paradox of empowerment" here, whereby "the very institutional structure that puts one group in a position to empower also works to undermine the act of empowerment" (p353). Simon (1990) similarly outlines "a fundamental dilemma" (p31) whereby professionals (here social workers) cannot give power without disempowering within wider "contextually-based inequalities" (p32):

"Social workers counsel, serve, assist, enable, catalyze, foster, nurture, mobilize, advocate, comfort, inspire, facilitate, broker, teach, train, lobby, and organize in myriad ways that help clients. Yet, ... the one function that social workers, or, for that matter, anyone else *cannot* perform for another person is that of empowerment" (p32).

Several commentators also found that "someone else can empower you ... a very bizarre idea" (FCLD Interview), at best confusing and at worst impossible in practice. This view is supported by numerous studies which have concluded that empowerment initiatives cannot be imposed, instead depending on communities themselves leading and supporting (e.g. Barr 1995b; Castlemilk Umbrella Group 1988; McManus et al 1993). For some therefore, giving power is contrary to empowerment, rather than being one possible approach:

"Empowerment's a phrase I wouldn't tend to use that much ... because there's something slightly patronising about it, sort of like a notion that you can give somebody else power, which I don't think you can. People take power" (LCDP Interview).

Whilst recognising such criticisms, there are three key advantages of this dynamic. First it does at least acknowledge the imbalances of power relations, such as those between workers and users (Evans 1992), rather than assuming all participants are equally able to create their own empowerment. This research has repeatedly identified

the importance of a recognition of inequalities in empowerment practice, including power differentials.²

A second advantage of giving power is its recognition of users' powerlessness (Sykes 1995). The SAMH Advocacy and Empowerment Group had universal experience of powerlessness at the hands of medical and other mental health professionals and institutions. Conceptualising power as a concrete 'thing' which can be given, and just as quickly removed, clearly reflected their experience of being 'done to':

"A lot of power is taken away from you in hospital. You're some sort of patient, you know, and you do what they say. 'Yes Sir, No Sir, Three Bags Full.' 'Have you taken your tablets?' 'Yes.' And so on - it's like being locked up" (SAMH Interview).

Third and finally here, this dynamic reflects the multi-layered and complex nature of power relations, whereby divisions do not simply exist between individual inherently powerful and powerless groups. For example several projects acted as bridges between less powerful user groups and more powerful formal service providers, such as Stirling Youth Action Project which, as an independent voluntary organisation, linked together the local authority community education team, other adults and local young people. This intermediary role involved giving power from more to less powerful groups:

"Empowerment is you taking the power away from the adults and away from the specialised [community education] team, and giving it to the young people, and they're the voice then" (SYAP Interview).

Empowerment as Giving Up Power

"People can empower themselves by exerting more influence over their own lives. They can be supported to do so, but you cannot give power to another person, though you can stop taking it away" (SAMH Document³).

The dynamic of giving up power suggests empowerment as a more complex and multi-directional process than simply giving power. Here workers free up their own power for users to take, whilst also not removing what little power users may have. Gibson (1991) claims this ability of the powerful to release power and the powerless to take power in itself illustrates empowerment's dynamic qualities. Thus empowerment is facilitated rather than forced:

² This issue was more fully explored in (3.3) Types of Involvement (3. Implementation and Service Delivery, What Role for Workers? pp144-6), and (4.3) Blocks and Barriers in Empowerment (False Empowerment: Tokenism and Low Expectations, Some are More Equal than Others, pp209-11).

³ Advocacy and Empowerment: What's it all about? (training materials).

"No one can give power to another person, but they can stop taking their power away. They can also help people to regain their own power. This is what we mean by empowerment" (Read and Wallcraft 1992 p5).

This dynamic assumes that power is limitless rather than zero sum, and consensual rather than conflictual, as the powerful willingly give up their power advantage. This interpretation was supported by commentators who claimed those with and without power in fact share collective goals and aspirations, rather than competing:

"There's a sense in which people say, 'If some people are going to become empowered then some other people have to be disempowered'. And that's the idea that there's only a certain amount of power to go around, so if you give to some, you take away from others. ... Conceptually the argument's an easy one to understand, but if you go and look at Drumchapel there is a power vacuum. There's a vacuum that can be filled by people doing things that need to be done in the community that in fact don't take power away from the people who have it already, but work towards the same aims and objectives" (DCHP Interview).

Giving up power also involves creating the overall conditions or culture where empowerment is more likely to happen (Eng et al 1992), or rather "setting up situations so that other people have access to power" (Marun et al 1993 in Stoecker 1997b p41). This research particularly identified this within self-help group processes, whereby workers encouraged users to define the content, direction and pace of developments (Fieldnotes, various). Within their training sessions, the SAMH Advocacy and Empowerment Group actively promoted "an ideology that you respected everyone's space and you were sympathetic. All the things that were not given outside" (SAMH Interview). Similarly the Empowerment Project aimed (although with seemingly less success) to create a ward culture whereby patients would first and foremost "be valued as people" (EP Interview) and as equal partners in care. This meant "creating a climate where people who didn't get any say or didn't have a high degree of choice had more of a voice, more choice, which meant in the NHS setting, folk would have to give up power" (EP Interview). As one commentator explained, the institutional setting seemed to be draining patients of their individualism and power to effect change, whereas empowerment (as not removing their power) could help them maintain control:

"I think empowerment is leaving with people the areas that they still have the ability to make decisions about. And that is very closely linked to not emptying the people of 'who I am'. ... In hospital there is very much a giving over of yourself. ... I just don't like seeing people being drained of who they are and becoming nonentities. ... [Empowerment is] looking at people's abilities, what they are actually able to do and maximising that, and providing every possible opportunity to allow them to have control of what happens to them. Even if it's as minuscule as 'I don't want to put on my brown trousers today, I think I'll put on my black ones', then I think that should remain. And whether it's brown trousers that don't

actually go with the jumper that's on, to pot! They are holding onto something that says 'I am controlling' (EP Interview).

This dynamic involves workers "loosening or devolving" the power they hold (Scottish Association for Mental Health undated p18), however they retain potentially critical roles, such as resourcing, facilitating, acting as allies, informing and practically supporting users (Carabine 1996). Consequently here, unlike in giving power, workers can empower others. As one Foundation for Community Leadership Development trainer claimed, influenced by Rogerian psychoanalytic theory, workers have clear responsibilities:

"My feeling is ... that you can't actually give people power, they've somehow got to take it for themselves. ... He [Carl Rogers] said that he believed that you couldn't give people power, all you could do is try not to take it away. So it wasn't even as subtle as saying 'There's your power, take it.' The best I could do was try not to take this power away" (FCLD Interview).

Users also have critical roles and responsibilities here, as empowerment depends on them taking the power that is freed up for them. Empowerment is thus "about people deciding for themselves, ... it's something that they themselves make choices about" (EP Interview), avoiding earlier criticisms of giving power that users' passivity is encouraged. Users were amongst supporters of this approach, for example stating, "I don't agree with people sitting back and being served by professional people. ... I'm more interested in people actually doing things for themselves" (LCDP Interview). As noted in the previous chapter, this shift from being passively acted upon through the unilateral donation of power to being active subjects who adopt responsibility for their own empowerment is critical for users.⁴ As one worker (a former user) claimed:

"You can enable them but you cannot empower them. You can enable them to empower themselves, only they can find that for themselves, but they need the resources to do that. You can't give people power, but you can give up power. ... You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink. It's exactly the same principle. People can only empower themselves" (SAMH Interview).

Giving up power was a particularly prominent dynamic within this research due to the predominance of projects championing self-help or mutual aid approaches, which refuse to see users as wholly powerless and which aim to avoid the power imbalances and hierarchies inherent in professional help (Read and Wallcraft 1992). This was perhaps most clearly identified within the Lothian Coalition of Disabled People's self-advocacy model, whereby restricting voting rights to people with disabilities promoted self-determination, "pushing disabled people forward" by "enabling people

⁴ As discussed in (5.2) Steps and Stages in Empowerment (Social Development: Service and Action, pp232-3).

to take responsibility and also enabling professionals to take less responsibility" (LCDP Interview).

However difficulties remain within this dynamic, most clearly in its perhaps optimistic assumption that the powerful will willingly to give up their power for the powerless to take. In reality, as this research confirms, all workers do not follow consensual and limitless interpretations of power, and some will resist giving up this advantage. Such criticisms lead to an alternative, more radical suggestion: seizing power.

Empowerment as Seizing Power

"It [empowerment] can't be one set of people deciding what's good for another set. It's about individuals doing it for themselves" (LCDP Interview).

The third dynamic of empowerment explored here involves the powerless seizing power, recognising that "Empowerment is something that cannot be given; it must be taken" (Rappaport 1985 p18).⁵ This is the most radical and conflictual interpretation of empowerment, although there are similarities to giving power, in that both are unilateral transactions which tend to assume power is zero sum. Heller (1989) suggests however that only seizing power is "meaningful":

"Empowerment literally means the process of giving power or authority to an individual or group. However, used as an action metaphor the term can be misleading. It suggests that power can be given to some group, when in actuality meaningful power must be taken" (p8).

Much of the case for seizing power is premised on critiques of the other dynamics, such as their afore-mentioned individualist, consensual and egalitarian assumptions. This dynamic alternatively recognises that power relationships are unequal and the powerful seek to maintain them as such (Novak 1996), echoing warnings that one must not assume all workers want to empower all users (Rees 1991). As Arnstein (1969) claims "There is nothing new about that process. Since those who have power normally want to hang on to it, historically it has had to be wrested by the powerless, rather than proffered by the powerful" (p222). Some commentators agreed that empowerment has to reflect this reality:

"I believe that power is shared unequally amongst us, and that those people as individuals and as members of ... more powerful groups hold onto power for very good reasons, because they know, ... they understand

⁵ This discussion focuses on the seizure of power by people who are powerless, although clearly those who are powerful also seize power with quite different consequences (Labonte 1991).

the benefits that flow from being powerful. They therefore will hold onto that power, and will never willingly give it up. ... That means I think ... we're about seizing power, taking it from those people who have got it" (LCDP Interview).

Users particularly endorse this dynamic, having commonly experienced when "the power and control we all have the right to over our own lives is taken from us" (Scottish Association for Mental Health undated p6). As Morris (1995) champions, "you can't give people power, we have to take it for ourselves" (p4), supported by this research in claims that "I wouldn't like to use the word 'empowering' people. I think people do it for themselves" (DCHP Interview). Thus empowerment represents a reclamation of rights:

"I think there's a limited amount of power. There might be lots of it but it's not infinite. And there are people who have more power than others, and those who have more power than others will want to keep it. The job of anyone who feels disadvantaged or disempowered is to seize power for themselves" (LCDP Interview).

In itself therefore, seizing power is seen as empowering for users, in offering a "gaining of confidence and of ability to control one's life" (Novak 1996 p95). As with giving up power, users are assumed to be active, subjective individuals who "interact in their environment and do something about it" (DCHP Interview), consequently determining their own empowerment. Powerlessness is thus far from inevitable, as "People don't passively accept. They might feel they're powerless, but they won't accept it" (DCHP Interview). As Keenan and Pinkerton (1988) claim:

"The experience of deprivation and inequality, whether socio-economic, cultural or emotional, is never passive. People respond. They may adapt, challenge or collapse, but whichever, they make some form of response to their situation" (p235).

However seizing power does not necessarily make workers completely redundant, as they can support or resource users to seize power, "encouraging people to take control of their own lives and act for themselves" (Kearney and Keenan 1988 p3). They thus act as key allies rather than enemies (Morris 1995; also Gibson 1991). In simultaneously giving users power and actively assisting in their seizure of this power, one can see again that dynamics of empowerment are not mutually exclusive, and that the strongest practice uses a combination of approaches. Similarly seizing and freeing up power co-exist in practice, as illustrated by Drumchapel's Community Health Volunteers:

"Empowerment for volunteers is about something volunteers take. Projects don't give anybody empowerment. ... We won't and we can't anyway. ... It's never been about giving people power - I think that's a myth anyway. I think you create a situation where people, if they want it, can take it. ... What volunteers get out of the project is quite often what they put into it" (DCHP Interview).

Note here that seizing power does not necessarily embody zero sum definitions of power, with this research finding users can "take some control of their lives again ... and speak of more readiness to take a grip of their lives" (SCL Document⁶) without reducing anyone else's power. This was identified amongst women in particular, who reported moving from a life where "you're looking at four walls and your wean" (SCL Interview) to "taking more control of my life, doing things more for me, ... not taking a secondary role in everything anymore" (FCLD Interview).

Yet a key difficulty remains here in assuming the powerless will seize power, which somewhat naïvely assumes sufficient confidence and political development to take power from possibly reluctant, or even hostile, powerholders. Some projects consequently conceptualised this dynamic as a later stage of empowerment. For example Second Chance Learning's students were encouraged first to build their self-esteem and create their own agenda, using the project "as a way to increase their confidence ... [so] they can take some control of their lives again" (SCL Document⁷). Yet others found that, even over time, users could not be convinced that power was there for the taking, as this worker complains:

"How do you actually go about making these people understand that they can make a difference to their lives? What I keep hearing week after week is, 'Nobody listens!' or 'Och, you'll just listen and nothing will get done about it!' Not that empowerment is about me doing anything about it, but it's trying to convince them that there's enough of them that can do something about it. But I'm not quite sure how much they believe me" (SW&H Interview).

Empowerment as Sharing Power

"If you are here to help me then you are wasting your time. But if your liberation is tied up in mine, then let us begin" (Aboriginal woman quoted in Anderson 1996 p69).

The dynamic of sharing power, or "a devolution of power, a change in the balance" (EP Interview), promotes a quite different model of power as relational and consensual, consequently responding to earlier criticisms that power is "something which requires continual negotiation" rather than being a unilateral, "fixed possession" (Carabine 1996 p27). Thus power and empowerment constantly remain shifting and relational:

⁶ Hamilton, Edith and Paterson, Margaret (1993) Evaluation of Second Chance Learning.

⁷ Hamilton, Edith and Paterson, Margaret (1993) Evaluation of Second Chance Learning.

"It [empowerment] is not something that they do or we do - it's located entirely in the relationship. It's about seeing where people are, and then they need to come to the project on their terms not on our terms. And then it's about them working out what it is they want and us working out what it is we want and seeing if those things can be married, and then developing that. It can never be ... a situation where somebody comes in with their own agenda or flies off in all sorts of directions" (DCHP Interview).

The consensual element of sharing power ensures it is one of the less controversial dynamics, as here unequal individuals do not conflict with each other in increasing their own powerfulness. The Empowerment Project promoted this conceptualisation to try and convince nursing staff that greater mutual respect could be developed between staff, patients and relatives without conflict and challenge:

"We're not talking about them [patients] rising up and taking power over the hospital. It's not about that. It's about themselves being able to be listened to, and have a voice, and have some control over their daily life" (EP Interview).

Sharing power challenges notions of self-empowerment, as individual empowerment is inherently tied in to others' actions. This inter-dependence is also well illustrated by the Empowerment Project, which aimed to simultaneously empower all ward participants via a critical focus on nursing staff, as "if you've got disempowered staff, you've got disempowered patients and relatives, so it's a three-way triangle" (EP Interview).

The interactive element of sharing power links with concepts of stakeholding, whereby both participation and commitment come from all partners having a stake, or a real interest, in decisions and actions. Here power is limitless rather than zero-sum, suggesting empowerment is a 'win-win' scenario (Ahlquist 1997), or as Nozick (1993) claims, "Contrary to the belief that power sharing is giving up power, power sharing is gaining more power through building solidarity, vision and community purpose" (p31). Such relationships between workers and users shifts relationships "out of the welfare-saturated trap of service delivery" (Knight 1994 p20) towards synergistic and less hierarchical or paternalistic models:

"I think empowerment ... is about changing the way decisions are made and services are delivered. ... We want young people to tell us about the service they want. It's dead and buried, the old service where I sit in an office and I say, 'I know what people need', and I prescribe the medicine and I say, 'You've got to feel better'" (SYAP Interview).

Amongst practitioner-focused literature, there is particular discussion around this dynamic, reflecting the view that "In the long run, power sharing is likely to improve the working and living environment for everyone" (Read and Wallcraft 1992 p17).

For example Breton (1989) suggests sharing power encourages workers and group members to learn from each other and openly accept their differential power. Barnes and Walker (1996) alternatively argue that power differences are equalised through power sharing, as "authority deriving from professional knowledge is balanced by authority deriving from the experiential knowledge of the user" (p380).⁸ This research found that this approach came as somewhat of a revelation to those practitioners with greater experience of top-down, hierarchical initiatives, where those with power clung to their advantage at all costs. For example one of Stirling Youth Action Project's volunteers was surprised to find that:

"It was about 'we', it wasn't about how 'they' want to get there, or this is how 'they're' going to do it, or talking about 'us' as in 'us and them'. This project seemed to make 'us', as in the adults, part of the youth group and it also made the youth group part of the process of being involved with the workers. ... It was about clearly saying 'How are we going to do it? I'm here to support you'." (SYAP Interview).

However in that "one must have power in order to share it" (Labonte 1991 p21), this dynamic contains a clear flaw in assuming all workers are powerful. In addition even if workers are relatively powerful, as with giving up power this optimistically assumes they will want to share their power, rather than preserve differentials. Indeed this research identified several cases where individual workers "really created dependency" (SW&H Interview) amongst users, creating a "web" (SCL Interview) of reliance and subordination into which users became entangled:

"We had one or two workers here for a time who really seemed very good, but they almost took people within their web. When one of these workers left and another worker was more responsible for this group I saw big changes. She did leave them, supported but did leave them, and helped them get resources and stuff. And they moaned and groaned ... but ultimately they are much more free as a group - asking us for things, making their own phone calls to get transport, not getting it done for them" (SCL Interview).

This danger was also identified by workers themselves, who claimed the benefits of arms-length support take time to emerge as the complexities of power and empowerment slowly unravel. Thus only over time do workers realise they do not monopolise skills and are not the sole "holders of knowledge" (SCL Interview):

"I used to try and do everything for everybody - it was impossible! Now I'm smart enough to say 'I'll help you - you can do it and I'll help you'. And it's working and I think the people I'm working with are getting all the benefits. ... Now I walk with them instead of doing it for them" (SCL Interview).

⁸ The issue of users as experts was discussed in more detail in (3.3) Types of Involvement (3. Implementation and Service Delivery, Users as Experts, pp143-4).

Similarly users' enthusiasm for power-sharing cannot be a foregone conclusion, as they may also cling on to their own small amounts of power, preferring to emulate powerholders rather than power-sharers.⁹ Clearly power-sharing does not come naturally and has to be learned:

"Anybody in a position of leadership has to be encouraged ... to adopt a style which doesn't take away power from people. And that's a struggle sometimes, because often in local groups maybe the only person in a relatively small group with the ability to lead a group doesn't have that style" (LCDP Interview).

Empowerment as Awakening Power

"We will look at empowerment not as a gift that we powerful professionals make to those we identify as powerless; empowerment will mean that we recognise and accept the power that lies dormant in the poor and oppressed" (Breton 1989 p16).

The fifth and final dynamic explored here conceptualises empowerment as awakening a dormant "power within" (Labonte 1991 p19). This is a developmental rather than relational concept, as power is neither given nor taken but rather encouraged to grow in individuals. Rappaport (1985) draws parallels with the self-healing release of endorphins within the body, claiming everyone has empowerment as "a potential" which may or may not be fulfilled (p17). Thus empowerment involves "waking up the power in people already" (SAMH Interview), or ensuring internal power is "freed" (SAMH Interview).

Clearly responsibility for awakening this internal power ultimately rests with individuals themselves, encouraging an active and leading role for users in an essentially "reflexive" (Simon 1990 p32) process, whereby "the subject is the object" (Labonte 1991 p17; also Sykes 1995). Simon (1990) claims this control over one's own empowerment is in itself empowering, a claim echoed within the projects where empowerment critically meant users "discovered skills and powers within themselves which they never knew they had" (DCHP Document¹⁰). This self-empowering element brings claims that awakening power is the most 'genuine' dynamic, if "true power cannot be bestowed: it comes from within" (Rowlands 1995 p104¹¹).

⁹ As discussed in (3.3) Types of Involvement (7. Passive and Non-Involvement, Ownership and Power, pp160-2).

¹⁰ Co-ordinator of Glasgow Healthy City Project cited in Kennedy, Aine (1994) Practising 'Health for All' in a Glasgow Housing Scheme: The Drumchapel Healthy Cities Project 1990-1992.

¹¹ Commenting on Taliaferro (1991).

This dynamic was best illustrated by the Foundation for Community Leadership Development, which claimed "essentially personal qualities cannot be taught but people can be helped to discover them within themselves" (FCLD Document¹²). FCLD's training and community development work therefore aimed "to help release the natural and often untapped creative talents and energies of people and groups" (FCLD Document¹³) by developing participants' self-awareness and self-control. As one freelance trainer explained, awakening power is critical in empowerment, as continually gaining external power ensures individuals remain unaware of the power they already possess (in FCLD Fieldnotes):

"When we think about relationships we obviously think about relationships with parties other than ourselves. But I think the essence of empowerment starts with the relationship you have with yourself, and to what extent you take seriously your own needs, your own feelings, your own limits, your own frailties and so forth. And so a lot of what we're doing on the empowerment front is about getting more in touch with, relating better to yourself and your own needs" (FCLD Interview).

Although awakening power is clearly tied in with individual responsibility, again workers retain a critical role, for example "helping people to discover their gifts and to extend their abilities" (FCLD Interview), and "making people aware of the skills and abilities that they have, ... just making these people aware that they do have the ability to empower themselves" (SW&H Interview). Through supporting, facilitating, enabling and offering resources to assist in awakening users' dormant power, workers thus act as a "channel for self-empowerment" (SAMH Interview). This supports Simon's (1990) assertion that professionals can only "aid and abet" (p32) empowerment by creating the right conditions, relationships, resources and processes. Critically here empowerment is not something which is 'done to' users, as users retain responsibility and control, overcoming the earlier criticisms of other dynamics:

"A lot of the stuff is lying there waiting and they [users] are not using it in terms of their own skills and their own abilities. It's about releasing that as much as saying, 'What can other people give us?' all the time" (SW&H Interview).

However questions remain here as to whether workers are involved here in helping people or changing people. Duncan and Cribb (1996) claim this is "a key ambiguity" (p340), with their Foucauldian analysis suggesting empowerment is more about normalisation than challenging power relationships. The earlier accusations of empowerment as paradoxical (Gruber and Trickett 1987) also re-emerge here, with

¹² Foundation for Community Leadership Development (undated) Draft explanatory leaflet.

¹³ Foundation for Community Leadership Development (1990) Overview of Aims, Objectives and Activities 1989/90.

Simon (1990) questioning how far individuals can be helped by workers without undermining empowerment itself:

"Does not the very act of enabling another add to that person's dependence on the helper, especially if the enabler is a professional who has the official authority to expand or shrink the life chances of the recipient of help?" (p31).

Similarly within this research, helping approaches were identified as inherently disempowering, for failing to recognise the power of individual autonomy and potential:

"If I want to help a person, that is disempowering. If I know that they're pretty fucked, but I know as well that ... they are not defeated, ... then I don't have to always intervene because they are at the end of the day responsible for their own lives. ... The empowering relationship will ... trust that the person will find the resources within themselves to do something about it" (FCLD Interview).

Finally here awakening power, like power sharing, is criticised for its consensual assumption that "empowerment isn't me versus you" (FCLD Interview). Some claim this fails to recognise the unequal distribution of power and the need for collective organisation and campaigning. As one critic claimed, "in the realpolitik of the world out there, ... they're not going to come and put it [power] through my letterbox. They're going to have to go and organise" (FCLD Interview).

Conclusion

This chapter has identified and explored five dynamics of empowerment, representing five power relationships: giving, giving up, seizing, sharing and awakening power. Each has clear implications for the respective roles of the powerful and powerless (such as workers and users), and the practical empowerment approach followed. Critically no individual dynamic appears to offer an ideal model for practice, with each having its own advantages and limitations

First, in giving power the empowerer retains control whilst users remain passive, with supporters claiming this acknowledges power differences, users' powerlessness, and the complexity of power relations, whilst critics claim it is paradoxical to suggest empowerment can be given. Second, the powerful can give up power, or not remove others' power, suggesting power is limitless and consensual. This involves creating the conditions or culture for empowerment, and gives users a critical role in taking the power which is freed up. However critics claim it is naïve to assume the powerful will give up their power.

This suggests a third dynamic of seizing power, a more radical and conflictual relationship around zero sum power. This recognises that the powerful may wish to retain unequal power relations, and promotes an active and controlling role for users. Yet people who are powerless do not always seize power, suggesting this may be a later stage of empowerment once confidence and skills are developed. Fourth, power can be shared in a relational and consensual way, as in stakeholding approaches. This overlooks the fact that not all workers are powerful or want to their share power, with some more powerful users also preferring to retain power differentials. Finally, empowerment can mean awakening power in a developmental and consensual sense. Users are active here in empowering themselves, although workers can assist. However it is questionable whether workers want to help users or change them.

Such claims and counterclaims suggest that combined approaches offer the most useful approach, and indeed in practice projects demonstrated a preference for mixed dynamics. However whilst this suggests flexibility, once more difficulties emerged when participants were in conflict about when each dynamic was most appropriate. These themes re-emerge in the following and final chapter of Part Five, Identifying Empowerment.

5.4 IDENTIFYING EMPOWERMENT

Introduction

"Empowerment conveys both a psychological sense of personal control or influence and a concern with actual social influence, political power and legal rights" (Rappaport 1987 p121).

The final dimension of empowerment explored in this research concerns ways in which the concept is identified in practice. Commentators were asked what evidence of empowerment they would seek if they were researching their own project, to offer concrete examples and to identify why exactly these represented empowerment. This approach sought to overcome the limitations of the literature, whereby there is little exploration beyond naming three broad types of identifiable empowerment: perception (feeling powerful), capacity (having potential power), and action (exercising power).

This chapter discusses each of these three types in detail, before outlining overall implications for measurement and evaluation. However first the more general issue of seeking evidence is reviewed.

Seeking Evidence: What Does Empowerment Look Like?

"People can be quite hostile to the word empowerment, believing that it is over-used without much thought being given to what it actually means. This may indeed be the case but I certainly know what the word means when I experience empowerment" (Morris 1995 p4).

Contrary to accusations that empowerment is woolly and intangible,¹ many participants in empowerment-based initiatives claim the concept is in fact easy to identify and clearly visible. Commentators claimed "I have been given the opportunity to see empowerment ... in practice" (SYAP Document²), commonly identifying "living examples of empowered participation" (DCHP Document³). Visible empowerment was identified in changes which "you could feel when you see them"

¹ As discussed in (3.2) The Language of Empowerment ("Tainted with Jargon!", pp129-31).

² Beaton, Janice (1994) St Ninian's Summer Planning Group: Report for BACE 2 Jordanhill College of Education.

³ Kennedy, Aine (1994) Practising 'Health for All' in a Glasgow Housing Scheme: The Drumchapel Healthy Cities Project 1990-1992.

(SCL Interviews). Arguably therefore empowerment is "describable and developed" (Rappaport 1987 p136) to such an extent that "When people in an organisation are empowered, you can walk in the door and feel the difference" (Foy 1994 p1):

"Some of them come in at first, and it took them all their time to get out of bed. [Now] Their appearance really has changed, in terms of their hair's combed, the weans seem to be a bit brighter, they're wanting to do things. It's really their appearance. We can see it in their appearance first" (SCL Interview).

Such identifiable empowerment was illustrated by endless "individual stories" (FCLD Interview) of "phenomenal successes" (DCHP Interview). Such examples repeatedly illustrated however that "empowerment works differently in different situations and with different people" (Newmark 1995 p5), continuing to highlight "the difficulty in defining and hence measuring such outcomes as greater empowerment" (DCHP Document⁴).

The question therefore remains as to what is empowerment? Several writers support Gibson's (1991) claim that empowerment is "easier understood by its absence ... powerlessness, helplessness, hopelessness, alienation, victimization, subordination, oppression, paternalism, loss of a sense of control over one's life and dependency" (p355). For example Gaster's (1996) definition of empowerment includes the absence of all that is disempowering" (p60), whilst Rappaport (1985) discusses real and imagined powerlessness, learned helplessness and alienation, claiming more positive identification is difficult as empowerment varies in appearance across problems and contexts.

However this research found more support for Zimmerman and Rappaport's (1988) claim that empowerment is "more than the absence of alienation, helplessness, or powerlessness" (p747), with three types of evidence clearly identifiable: perception (feeling powerful), capacity (having potential power), and action (exercising power). Within the literature, as Table 8 illustrates, "indicators and outcomes" of empowerment (Strathclyde Regional Council 1993) commonly span these three types.

⁴ McGhee, Sarah; McEwen, J; Kennedy, Aine and Craig, Pauline (1991) Drumchapel Healthy Cities Project: Report on the First Year Evaluation, August 1991.

Table 8: Empowerment Theory and Evidence of Empowerment

Author(s)	Evidence of Empowerment
Barnes et al (1996)	Increased confidence, self worth, skills, and opportunities for participation, choice and control; participation in training, educational or work opportunities; and recognition that experiential knowledge is respected by others, including professionals.
Dailly (1992)	Increased self confidence, ability to articulate need, understanding of relationships with local government and statutory agencies, support for the social rather medical model of disability, and activity in other community groups and organisations.
Frans (1993 in Ahlquist 1997)	Having a concept of oneself, a critical awareness of one's place in the world, knowledge and skills, individual propensity to act, and a sense of collective identity.
Kieffer (1984)	Self esteem, causal importance and efficacy.
Kindervatter (1979 in Labonte 1991)	Improved self esteem and cultural identity, critical and problem-solving abilities, and ability to make choices; more equitable social relationships; better self discipline and joint working; greater access to resources; greater collective bargaining power; and increased recognition of demands by those in authority.
McConnell (1996)	Increase in knowledge, skills, confidence and ability to influence change.
Strathclyde Regional Council (1993; undated)	Individual development, local representative leadership, community influence in public decision-making, staff empowerment, decentralisation, strong community controlled organisations, and direct community control of local resources and assets.
Zimmerman and Rappaport (1988)	Self-acceptance, self-confidence, social and political understanding, and assertion in the control of resources and local decision-making.

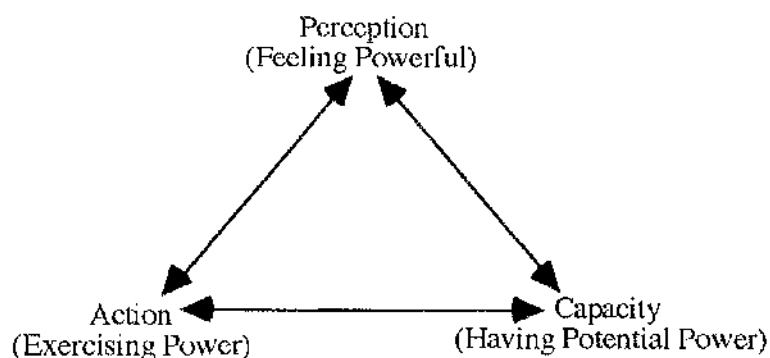
Zimmerman et al (1992) identify intrapersonal, interactional and behavioural "components" in empowerment, namely self-perceptions of control, the ability to influence social and political systems, and the exercise of control. Simon (1990) defines empowerment as "one's individual sense of potency as well as one's demonstrated power to influence" (p28), and Stoecker (1997b) "as a feeling and as a reality" (p41), whilst Gelb and Sardell (1974) claim that both protest (action) and community organisation (capacity) can alter power relationships. Rappaport (1987) states empowerment "has components that are both psychological and political" (p121), with Evans (1992) claiming empowerment involves both "perceived and actual ability to determine change" (p140). Similarly Hall (1992) argues that "empowerment includes both a personal strengthening and enhancement of life chances, and collective participation" (p83), whilst McWhirter (1991) claims empowerment is a process by which the powerless:

- "(a) become aware of the power dynamics at work in their life context,
- (b) develop the skills and capacity for gaining some reasonable control over their lives, (c) exercise this control without infringing upon the rights of others and (d) support the empowerment of others in the community" (in Rowlands 1995 p103).

McWhirter (1991 in Rowlands 1995) explains that the achievement of all of these conditions is "the situation of empowerment" whilst achieving some is "an

empowering situation", which usefully suggests that more critical than identifying discrete types is exploring and understanding their interaction. Indeed Stoecker (1997b) claims empowerment only exists within this very interaction, for example "when the feeling of empowerment matches what is actually happening" (p41). Thus perception, capacity and action inter-relate as illustrated in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Evidence of Empowerment



This interactional model was also identified within the projects, for example where users' participation (action) was seen to build confidence, self-esteem and self-belief (perception), as well as new skills and abilities (capacity). As this commentator claims:

"I would look for people who go away feeling more authoritative in their role, more able to take up their own space. ... I would measure it by whether the people who involve themselves are empowered personally to perform better in whatever their roles are" (FCLD Interview, emphasis added).

In this way Stirling Youth Action Project's youth action training explored experiences of feeling powerful and powerless alongside those of using power both positively and negatively (SYAP Document⁵). Indeed this very interaction of perception, capacity and action is critical to the social action approach promoted by this project, as outlined by Bell et al (1990):

"It [empowerment] is a conscious attempt to help them gain for themselves the necessary knowledge, understanding and skills to develop the feelings, attitudes and values to be able to think and act in ways which will increase their control over their own lives and their ability to speak for themselves" (p5 in Fyfe 1994 p25).

Perception, capacity and action are now defined and explored in turn, with examples of their interaction continually highlighted.

⁵ Stirling Youth Action Project (1993) Evaluation Report: Youth Action Training Weekend 5-7 March 1993.

Empowerment as Perception: Feeling Powerful

"Empowerment is an internal process and it's very wrapped up with people's perceptions of themselves and of the world. ... Empowerment is about the lenses that you look at the world and yourself through" (FCLD Interview).

Just as powerlessness is both a perception and an experience, empowerment is concerned with altering thoughts as much as actions (Rowlands 1995). Indeed some classify "psychological empowerment" (Zimmerman and Rappaport 1988 p727) and "perceived control" (Keller and Dansereau 1995 p131) as most critical, such as Zimmerman (1990) who found a sense of empowerment was more instrumental in reducing alienation than actual participation in community development initiatives. Here empowerment involves not "*having* more power but rather *feeling* more powerful" (Kieffer 1984 p32).

Such evidence of empowerment is, perhaps unsurprisingly, most commonly sought in psychological discourse, where "feeling capable of acting" (Gruber and Trickett 1987 p354) and a "felt sense of empowerment" (Zimmerman and Rappaport 1988 p727) are considered key indicators of success. Thus Chavis and Wandersman (1990) cite perceived control over one's environs and a sense of community as essential indicators of empowerment, whilst Zimmerman et al (1992) focus on empowerment's "intrapersonal component", consisting of perceived control, perceived efficacy and belief systems.

Such felt empowerment was also commonly identified within the projects, emerging in three main forms. First, as feeling valued, recognising that "in order to feel genuinely empowered, a person must value themselves and be valued as an individual" (EP Document⁶). Evidence of empowerment here included finding participants' "own sense of worth and self-esteem had increased" (SYAP Interview), as this commentator recalls of her project's 'away day':

"People were using words that really meant to say they were being empowered by it. They were saying, 'I feel that I'm taken seriously'; I feel that I'm listened to'; I feel that I've got something to offer' (LCDP Interview).

Second, as feelings of influence and control over change, aiming for "individuals and groups involved not only to feel more empowered as a result of the change but more to see it as a product of their own choices and efforts" (FCLD Document⁷). Third,

⁶ The Empowerment Project (1993) Proposal for Staff Seminars 20.9.93.

⁷ Foundation for Community Leadership Development (1992) Forward Plan 1992-4.

empowerment was identified as greater "self-confidence" (FCLD Interview) and "a sense that you'd be able to speak up for yourself and for someone else" (SAMH Interview), creating "more of a sense of self" (SW&H Interview) overall.

A key strength of such indicators is their heavy reliance on users' own testimonies as evidence of empowerment. For example Morris (1995), speaking of her experiences as a disabled woman, claims empowerment "makes me feel good about myself, makes me feel valued, which opens up choices for me, which makes me feel things are possible". The projects also illustrated the strength of user-led evidence, most notably though personal testimonies,⁸ ensuring success was not simply defined by workers:

"I think with empowerment you've got to make sure we don't just think people are becoming empowered. They've got to feel it from within" (DCHP Interview).

Perceptions of empowerment clearly interact with potential and actual experiences. For example Rappaport (1981) describes feelings of power as "the essence of empowerment" (p15), claiming a "sense of control" (p15) has placebo-type effects, whereby individuals think they have power and therefore actually become powerful. Mondros and Wilson (1994) agree that "Empowerment ... refers to a psychological state - a sense of competence, control, and entitlement - that allows one to pursue concrete activities aimed at becoming powerful" (p5). In this way Drumchapel Community Health Project sought to build self-confidence and self-esteem, linking "perceived control" with improved physical and mental states by recognising that communities' health suffers as much from their lack of control as environmental and social deprivation (DCHP Interview).

Some commentators claimed however that feeling powerful alone equates to empowerment, without necessarily building capacity or exercising power. Thus "a sense of empowerment, ... even if you might not know what to do with that, ... is good to feel" (DCIIP Document⁹). This adequacy of perception alone is supported by Deveau (1994), who claims that perceptions of power are central to women's empowerment, regardless of whether these feelings have any "objective possibilities" (p234). Similarly, Rees (1991) is critical of empowerment analyses which fail to examine how power feels for participants, claiming such insight is fundamental to any "critical perspective of power" (p37). He adds that ignoring participants' feelings in

⁸ The role of personal testimony as evidence of empowerment is discussed in more detail later in this chapter (Measuring and Evaluating Empowerment, p271).

⁹ Kennedy, Aine (1994) Practising 'Health for All' in a Glasgow Housing Scheme: The Drumchapel Healthy Cities Project 1990-1992.

favour of more objective and concrete indicators of empowerment risks "stifling" their involvement (p37).

Yet others argue that perception is not "actual empowerment" (Chavis and Wandersman 1990 p75), such as Baistow (1994) who claims that focusing on perception as both a root of disempowerment and a route to empowerment simply identifies users as empowerment "candidates" or "psychological subjects" (pp35-6). This limits responses to counselling or groupwork within "orthodox, individualising psychology", emphasising "cognitive strategies and behavioural skills" (p36) above the wider roots of powerlessness such as injustice or oppression.

Empowerment as Capacity: Having Potential Power

"It's about convincing young people, you've got the talent, you've got the ability. They've got the ability - they're scared to use it" (SYAP Interview).

Gibson (1991) identifies empowerment's linguistic roots in the Latin 'potere': to be able. Thus empowerment involves increasing "the capacity to influence the forces which affect one's life for one's own benefit" (Pinderhughes 1983 p332), the capacity to produce change (Miller 1983 in Evans 1992), and "the possibilities for people to control their own lives" (Rappaport 1981 p15). Critically this capacity, or "the ability to be active and to be effective" (FCLD Interview), is identified as empowerment regardless of whether power is actually exercised.

Three approaches to building capacity can be identified. First are those which develop skills, knowledge, resources and abilities, all of which powerlessness acts to undermine. This reflects Zimmerman et al's (1992) "interactional component" of empowerment, whereby individuals are linked to their environments via problem-solving and decision-making skills, knowledge and resources. Empowerment here means "teaching them [users] about power dynamics and the systems in which they live" (Pinderhughes 1983 p334). Commentators identified such knowledge about power relations as particularly important, including "knowing the procedures and things like that" (LCDP Interview). Again noting the interaction between different types of empowerment, this development of skills and abilities is essential for action: "The people who can go out and handle the world that they couldn't handle before, you know that's empowerment, that's what it's all about. It's making people aware of what's going on around them, and able to handle it, and making decisions for themselves" (SCL Interview).

Second is creating the right conditions or culture for empowerment to take place.¹⁰ For example Second Chance Learning claimed their successful attraction of adult learners was because "most importantly, the atmosphere is right" (SCL Document¹¹). More broadly, the Lothian Coalition of Disabled People challenged an overall culture of discrimination, for example creating the Access Ability educational brokerage programme "to effect change in the capacity of existing providers to meet the needs of adults with disabilities" (LCDP Document).

Third, capacity-building involves developing "tools" or "facilities" (SAMH Interview). This approach underpinned the Foundation for Community Leadership Development's skills-based courses, such as confidence-building, effective speaking, supervision and group work. Increased capacity is thus clearly linked with action, through "equipping people with the tools for social change" (FCLD Interview). FCLD also promoted community capacity-building tools to encourage communities to "lose feelings of dependency and begin to exercise far greater control over their own lives", and "move from an isolated or marginal situation to one of participation and active contribution" (FCLD Document¹²). As one trainer explained, equipping people with tools is preferable to providing set solutions, as empowerment remains experiential and self-directed (in FCLD Fieldnotes):

"Its about encouraging people to take responsibility for their own lives, and giving them the tools to enable them to make changes in their lives. ... There's no blueprint for that, because everybody's individual. There's no way we can say, 'Right! We'll run X number of classes, and we will empower!'" (SCL Interview).

A critical advantage of capacity-building is that the initiative remains with users, and thus (as with feeling powerful) participants ultimately decide whether or not to become empowered. As one Community Health Volunteer claimed, this "is definitely an empowering situation, because ... everything you do do is off your own back" (DCHP Interview). The potential for different outcomes suggests similarities with equal opportunities approaches, whereby empowerment does not necessarily mean everyone has equal power, but rather aims to "... open up horizons, ... open up expectations, ... open up opportunities" (SW&H Interview) to make chances and choices as free of constraints as possible:

"For me, ... it [empowerment] doesn't mean that everyone should drive around in a Rolls Royce, or that everyone should go to Barbados or whatever. It means that at the point at which any individual has to make a

¹⁰ This was also discussed in (5.3) Dynamics of Empowerment (Empowerment as Giving Up Power, pp247-50).

¹¹ Second Chance Learning (1994) Second Chance Learning in the Community (leaflet).

¹² Foundation for Community Leadership Development (1990) Overview of Aims, Objectives and Activities 1989/90.

choice in their life, that choice is informed and freed of constraint"
(LCDP Interview).

As with the other types of evidence, defining empowerment as capacity has inherent difficulties, not least that it is a slow and difficult approach (Wilcox 1994). A key criticism is that increased capacity for change does not guarantee actual change. For example the Empowerment Project's introduction of a ward-based newspaper delivery service, aiming to increase patients' spending opportunities, initially attracted very few sales, contrary to earlier expectations. Project staff consequently discovered nurses were acting as ward gatekeepers during deliveries, claiming none of 'their' patients were interested (EP Fieldnotes). Yet even when sales later increased, this approach to empowerment was seen as "very minimal. I'm sure it's quite life enhancing given the low base, but very minimal" (EP Interview). As Evans (1992) claims, identifying this gap between potential and actual power:

"is helpful in illuminating how someone may be powerful psychologically, personally or interpersonally, yet have little or no socially legitimated power to determine their own fate economically, socially or politically" (p141).

Yet what is the point of an approach to empowerment if one's fate remains tied in with wider uncontrollable forces? Examining LETS,¹³ North (1996) found that building capacity is necessary but not sufficient for empowerment, as "the capacity of the poor to pull themselves up entirely by their own bootstraps was limited by the extent that they were supported or stymied in their efforts by those with more power than themselves" (p269). Thus whilst the end result is not prescribed and the process itself is seen as valuable (North 1996), arguably only concrete action and identifiable change in power relations may act as evidence of empowerment.

Capacity-building is also criticised for raising expectations beyond attainable outcomes. As noted earlier,¹⁴ people who are powerless often have extensive experience of initiatives offering false promises and bringing consequent disappointment. Similarly if no action follows increased capacity for power, expectations of change will fall once more. Thus only creating "real opportunities" avoids such disillusionment (EP Document¹⁵), as one Empowerment Project commentator somewhat depressingly concluded:

"The main thing we have done is talk to people about how they feel. ... It's not empowerment itself. ... If you can't actually do anything, what are you doing to people? Are you raising their expectations, then it goes back

¹³ Local Economic Trading Schemes.

¹⁴ In (4.3) *Blocks and Barriers in Empowerment* (False Empowerment: Tokenism and Low Expectations, Experiences of Powerlessness, pp207-9).

¹⁵ Strathclyde Poverty Alliance (1992) Partnerships for Empowerment funding application.

to what it was before? That has worried me. ... We haven't empowered anybody. That's the basic fact" (EP Interview).

Empowerment as Action: Exercising Power

"Empowerment is people being able to do what they want to do, and putting everything in place to do it. It's not saying, 'We've failed again', but saying, 'We've done something' (SCL Interview).

The third type of evidence of empowerment is action, or rather "to exercise an appropriate degree of control ... over one's life" (Root 1996 p32). Thus empowerment means individuals "having power to take action to control and enhance their own lives" (Grace 1991 p330), or "being able to exercise power over someone else, as well as them exercising it over you" (Croft and Beresford 1990 p47). The critical point here is that users do not simply have power, but they actually make use of it. This research identified four discrete elements of exercising power.

First, an element of identifiable change (Lee 1986 in Evans 1992), with commentators claiming some participants underwent so many "changes" (LCDP Interview) that they became "totally unrecognisable!" (SCL Interview). Again here empowerment is evidenced as something that can be physically seen. As Barnes et al (1996) claim in relation to the Fife User Panels project, which involves older people in community care planning, "We will have failed if they are unchanged by the experience" (in Barnes and Walker 1996 p386). Here users specifically recognise themselves as causal forces in change, consequently "starting to look at what they can put back into the area" (SYAP Interview), and "making things happen" (LCDP Interview). Change also includes users "moving on" (DCHP Interview) to pursue their interests elsewhere:¹⁶

"The changes that I've seen in people that have been involved, from when they would sit in meetings and not say anything to suddenly they're doing things - writing letters, going to speak to people and even talking to other groups about things. ... To me that makes it all worthwhile" (LCDP Interview).

Second, empowerment is identified in users developing and running their own services, "taking responsibility" and "collectively working together on issues that they identified" (SYAP Interviews). For example where users are "looking to set up their own constitution and management committee, ... approaching the council for grant

¹⁶ As discussed in (5.2) Steps and Stages of Empowerment (Moving On: Empowerment Transfer, pp235-9).

aid, approaching community education perhaps for staff support etcetera etcetera. ... That to me is evidence of them being empowered" (SW&H Interview). Users themselves identified such a "culture of action" (SYAP Interview), including a Second Chance Learning student who claimed the project's creation of a float for their community festival was "a good example of empowerment. It was us who put it all together. I was empowered!" (SCL Interview). For workers this focus on users "learning by doing" (SYAP Document¹⁷) means handing over responsibility, "letting them [users] run the place" (SW&H Interview) or "running the clubs and stuff themselves" (SYAP Interview):

"My idea of this project is that it should be run by the women in the communities. They're the people who should be saying, 'Right, OK, we need a new Co-ordinator, this is how we're going to go about it!'" (SW&H Interview).

Within the literature, such action is particularly discussed within "the extent of decision-making power that people actually wield in an organisation" (Gruber and Trickett 1987 p353; also Barnes and Walker 1996). Zimmerman et al (1992) specifically identify the holding of leadership positions in community organisations, whilst McGregor et al (1992) class empowerment as "real participation" only when local people "gain control, perhaps through ownership" (p5).

Third, empowerment is evidenced as action when users challenge existing powerholders. Some workers themselves recognised that newly "autonomous and self-determined" (SW&H Document¹⁸) users may of course dissent, or as one claimed "evidence of an empowering process is when the membership and/ or the committee structure ... do things that I don't want them to" (LCDP Interview). For the Empowerment Project this meant "a rebellion taking place - the residents' meeting really getting a hold of something and pushing for it" (EP Interview). Whilst this never occurred, the Lothian Coalition of Disabled People offered concrete evidence, including one member who claimed "Four or five years ago there's no way that I would have challenged anybody, but now I will do" (LCDP Interview), and many other "people you saw a year or two ago working in someone's shadow, taking the initiative and doing things by themselves, interrupting, arguing" (LCDP Interview). Although "there was a time in this organisation when genuinely people would not have said boo to a goose, and would ask permission to do things" (LCDP Interview), this new willingness to challenge was particularly critical to the Coalition, whose campaigning nature meant powerholders had to be confronted:

¹⁷ Stirling Youth Action Project 9193) Annual Review '93: A positive approach to young people.

¹⁸ Stirling Women & Health Project (1989) Urban Aid funding application.

"Traditionally other people have spoken for disabled people. Through our coalition, disabled people will find their own voice. In our ways, we will speak for ourselves" (LCDP Document¹⁹).

This active speaking out "may be perceived as a significant measure of empowerment" in itself, according to some evaluative measures (DCHP Document²⁰).²¹ As this SAMH Advocacy and Empowerment Group trainee confirms, "There was quite a few times in hospital I should have been able to speak out. I never really got any better in the hospital as I never got to speak out" (SAMH Interview).

Fourth and finally here, empowerment is identified as action within "the tangibles" (EP Interview) of change, such as groups, meetings, events and structures, rather than simply processes or relationships. This particularly appealed to users, who sought less rhetoric and more concrete results, demanding "Less Talk, More Action!"²² or "We don't want talk, we want action!" (EP Document²³).

Whilst these four elements of exercising power are identifiable, critical questions remain as to whether such action equates to empowerment. A first and central criticism focuses on the definition of tangible services and developments as empowerment, even if individuals have no control over their content or direction. For example the Empowerment Project's creation of services for patients and relatives arguably failed to alter the fundamental power structures which kept these groups powerless within the care setting:

"Partly the perception that the [Care of the Elderly] Unit had of empowerment was creating more tangible services, creating new services, extra services, which at the end of the day isn't really what empowerment's about. It's an important element to it anyway, but it's involving people in the use of those services and the ability to change those services as users" (EP Interview).

This suggests that empowerment is less about tangible results than how these are achieved. In this way, Stirling Youth Action Project used the young people's leading role in planning and delivering their own summer activities programme as evidence of empowerment as much as the existence of the programme itself.²⁴

¹⁹ Lothian Coalition of Disabled People (undated) publicity leaflet.

²⁰ Kennedy, Aine; Tannahill, Carol and Curtice, Lisa (1993) Evaluating 'Health for All' Practice at Community Level: The Drumchapel Healthy Cities Project.

²¹ Note that the role of 'voice' in empowerment was also discussed in (5.2) Steps and Stages in Empowerment (Personal Development: Confidence and 'Voice', pp230-1).

²² Stirling Youth Action Project's Top of the Town Youth Action Group used this as their slogan.

²³ This call by relatives was noted in The Empowerment Project (1993) Minutes of the Relatives Meeting 11.10.93.

²⁴ This summer activities programme was discussed in (3.3) Types of Involvement (3. Implementation and Service Delivery, pp142-3).

A second criticism concerns the tendency for action to be seen as superior, rather than simply different, evidence of empowerment than perception or capacity. In their study of an alternative school, Gruber and Trickett (1987) found empowerment succeeded in increasing parents' and students' feelings of power (perception) and ability to make choices (capacity), even though the institutional structure and power relations remained the same, concluding these were important outcomes in themselves.²⁵ Again here Stirling Youth Action Project pointed to substantial evidence of their young users being empowered, even though they did not actually manage the project:

"We can't see any evidence of people actually influencing the project by saying, 'No. This is the way we want to go.' So I think you then have to look at the evidence of how people in their own communities have maybe developed, and I think you can see where they are influencing issues in their own community, and as a result their quality of life has improved" (SYAP Interview).

Measuring and Evaluating Empowerment

The way in which empowerment is identified has clear implications for consequent measurement and evaluation, if all three types of perception, capacity and action are to be reflected. Indeed Rappaport (1984) recommends that evaluation assesses both a sense of control, measurable as an internalised attitude, and actual control, measurable as an observable behaviour. Notably, this research did not seek to scientifically measure empowerment in practice, heeding the difficulties associated with assessing this and similarly complex concepts, such as their varied definitions and forms, problems in identifying causal links, and initiatives' vague expectations and unspecified or unclear objectives (Gibson 1991; Hallett 1987; Rappaport 1984).²⁶

Seemingly aware of these difficulties, the projects demonstrated a range of flexible and innovative methods for measuring and evaluating their own empowerment practice, focusing on two main approaches. First they sought to identify "components of empowerment" (DCHP Document²⁷) or "measurable achievements" (SCL Document²⁸) to act as performance indicators (SYAP Document²⁹). This responded to

²⁵ These authors cite a range of other studies which met with similar conclusions (Michaels and political parties, 1959; Yates and decentralisation, 1973; and Witte and employment, 1980).

²⁶ The limitations of scientific measurements of empowerment were discussed in (1.1) Definitions and Concepts, Defining Empowerment, pp20-2).

²⁷ Kennedy, Aine; Tannahill, Carol and Curtice, Lisa (1993) Evaluating 'Health for All' Practice at Community Level: The Drumchapel Healthy Cities Project.

²⁸ Hamilton, Edith and Paterson, Margaret (1993) Evaluation of Second Chance Learning.

²⁹ Stirling Youth Action Project (1992) Action Plan 1992-93.

Read and Wallcraft's (1992) recommendation that "Reviews should assess how successfully the project empowers its users" (p21) at an individual level. Wider impacts were also assessed, although sustainability, longevity, and influence on agency practices are recognised as harder to measure (Breitenbach 1997). Here projects reviewed their "impact upon the area" (SYAP Document³⁰), and assessed the ability of individuals "to form a unified group and common agenda" (SAMH Document³¹).

Second, projects assessed empowerment through individual case histories and personal testimonies, commonly reported within project documents (such as evaluation reports) and other media (for example one volunteer wrote a play around her experience³²). Hall (1992) promotes such "life histories" as maps of empowerment's impact on individuals, whilst Rees (1991) notes the importance of "biography" in exploring individual experiences of empowerment (see also Treleaven 1994). In themselves case studies played a crucial role in sustaining involvement and momentum, whilst also maintaining projects more practically by appealing to funders and politicians. Interviews with users and volunteers confirmed the power of personal testimony as evidence of profound, and even life-changing, subjective experiences, notably commonly attributed to the "brilliant kick" (DCHP Interview) or "buzz" (LCDP Interview) they gained from participation in their project:

"I came on leaps and bounds from when I first got involved in the project. My confidence has taken an all-time rise to the top. ... Before I got involved, I felt worthless, I felt ... I was brought into this world to bring up four kids and end up with an alcoholic partner who was abusive and violent. ... I was suffering from depressions and I was suicidal. It actually woke me up to the real world ... finding that there was a lot more people the very same as myself. ... There was a hell of a lot that I could relate to. ... I'm more positive. ... Now I'm beginning to put myself in first place, as well as the weans. ... I've been so assertive and it's all thanks to the project" (DCHP Interview).

Commentators were generally positive about the use of personal testimony as evidence of empowerment, with Croft and Beresford's (1988a) accusations of voyeurism and exploitation of individuals not being raised. However it is recognised that users and volunteers may find their input is restricted to a personal platform, without their broader opinions and insights being acknowledged.³³

³⁰ Carstairs, Grant (1994) Stirling Youth Action Project Evaluation Report, July 1994.

³¹ Tait, Sue (1994) SAMH Advocacy and Empowerment Training Group Evaluation, February 1994.

³² This play is entitled 'Wan Tac Wan' and was written by Lorraine Houston, a Community Health Volunteer with Drumchapel Community Health Project. The community health volunteers have performed the play on several occasions.

³³ This point was also noted earlier by SAMH commentators in (3.3) Types of Involvement (Implementation and Service Delivery, Users as Experts, p144).

For some projects however the concern was less about evaluative methodology and more about the lack of *any* evidence of empowerment. Some commentators claimed their initiatives had had an "intangible positive effect" (EP Interview). Clearly evidence of empowerment has to be assessed in relation to the very real constraints of practice,³⁴ and reflect their status as "a drop in the ocean" (SYAP Interview) within wider socio-economic structures and trends. Consequently "community empowerment may often feel like attempting artificial respiration underwater" (Barr 1995b p7). As one commentator noted of the Foundation for Community Leadership Development:

"I think on the very micro level they can prove their successes. But it's harder to say that Pilton is a sunnier place because of FCLD. But I suppose one of my views about empowerment, ... is that the micro affects the macro. It's almost that you can't do one without the other" (FCLD Interview).³⁵

However others were more optimistic, claiming there was ample evidence of projects' empowering impact, even that "the project simply makes some things possible that were not possible before" (DCHP Document³⁶). Commentators were aware of the many constraints they faced, yet argued their practice was influential, "even if it's just the drip of water in terms of the process of change" (EP Interview), in that "the ripples [of change] ... spread out and have a much wider effect" (LCDP Interview):

"It's the pebble in the Atlantic Theory - you drop a pebble in the Atlantic, the ripple may be invisible but it goes on right the way to the coast" (FCLD Interview).

Conclusion

This chapter explored a final dimension of empowerment representing its identification in practice. Three types of evidence of empowerment were discussed in detail: perception (feeling powerful), capacity (having power), and action (exercising power), with the detail of discussion extending this research beyond the trend of simple identification within the literature.

Perception was identified in users feeling valued, influential, controlling and self confident. Whilst this type of empowerment is praised for focusing on users' own

³⁴ Such constraints were fully reviewed in the earlier chapter on (4.2) Bases of Power: Resources for Empowerment (pp180-95).

³⁵ Pilton is a peripheral housing estate in Edinburgh, and is one of the communities eligible for FCLD's subsidised training.

³⁶ Kennedy, Aine (1994) Practising 'Health for All' in a Glasgow Housing Scheme: The Drumchapel Healthy Cities Project 1990-1992.

experiences and listening to their testimonies, it also attracts criticism for being individualistic and ignoring the disempowering element of wider forces. Capacity-building was identified within approaches developing skills and knowledge, cultures and conditions for empowerment, and tools for change. Whilst again being user-led (in that users choose whether or not to exploit these new opportunities), this type of empowerment meets criticism for not necessarily creating change, with power relations remaining unchallenged. Action critically involves not only the possession of power, but also its use, being identifiable in users' individual change, development and delivery of their own services, challenges to powerholders and tangible outcomes. This active role for users is praised, along with recognition that they seek tangible results. However critics here ask how far concrete outcomes are empowering if users do not lead developments, claiming that exercising power should be seen simply as a different, rather than superior, type of empowerment.

Most critically, this chapter illustrated that perception, capacity and action each have advantages and disadvantages as types of empowerment. Once more within individual projects, clarity and agreement on what constitutes empowerment was identified as more important than confirming any single ideal or superior type. Their interaction was continually highlighted, drawing parallels with earlier discussions whereby a good process was claimed to result in a stronger product.³⁷

Finally here implications for measurement and evaluation were outlined, noting that projects reflected differences by using a range of tools and methods. These included the use of varied performance indicators along with a heavy reliance on users' personal testimonies. Whilst there were some complaints of a lack of evidence of empowerment, most participants recognised that empowerment could be identified to some degree, even if original expectations were not met and impacts only slowly emerged over time.

This thesis has continually illustrated the diversity and complexity of empowerment in theory and practice. Part Five confirmed this by exploring four critical conceptualisations of empowerment: its form, stepped or staged pattern, dynamics or power relations, and finally identification. Part Six suggests this diversity and complexity should not be ignored or simplified, but should rather underpin explorations of empowerment. A new conceptual framework of empowerment is therefore now outlined.

³⁷ As discussed in (5.1) The Form of Empowerment (Goals or Methods? Implications for Practice, pp216-9).

PART SIX

**A NEW
CONCEPTUAL
FRAMEWORK
OF
EMPOWERMENT**

Introduction

As outlined at the start of this thesis, this study aimed to overcome three key limitations of previous empowerment research. First, the failure to integrate theoretical and conceptual findings from the literature with the lessons and experiences of empowerment practice. Second, the tendency to evaluate rather than explore the concept, in particular through 'cookbook' type approaches. Third, the lack of any conceptual framework which allows critical and structured yet flexible exploration of empowerment's complexities and contradictions.

The preceding chapters have sought to address the first two limitations, by demonstrating both that existing theories and concepts of empowerment can be usefully discussed alongside practical experiences, and that empowerment's multi-dimensionality can only be fully acknowledged through open-ended exploration, rather than value-based evaluation (which necessarily relies on limited definitions of the concept). This final and concluding chapter seeks to address the third limitation by outlining a new conceptual framework of empowerment.

This new framework brings together the themes, dimensions and distinctions of empowerment which have been identified and explored throughout this thesis. This chapter therefore begins by summarising the questions and answers arising from Parts One to Five of the thesis. The need for a new conceptual framework is then discussed, before the process of its construction is reviewed. The structure of the framework is then described as a guide, and the framework itself is illustrated. This chapter ends with this thesis' concluding comments on lessons for future research and practice.

Exploring Empowerment: Questions and Answers

"The project is successful if you discover a lot of questions and answers that you did not realise were important when you began" (Rubin and Rubin 1995 p167).

As this thesis enters its final part, it is clear that many new questions have indeed arisen from this research, as the complexities, contradictions, ambiguities and tensions of the empowerment "jigsaw" (EP Interview) have been explored.

However new answers have also been found for five of the six critical questions identified in the Introduction. These first asked why empowerment requires to be unpacked. **PART ONE: UNPACKING EMPOWERMENT** began by illustrating the limitations of existing definitions and conceptualisations, such as their tendency to promote evaluative rather than exploratory approaches, and their failure to adequately reflect empowerment's multi-dimensionality. Common dimensions threading through competing theories of power were then explored to suggest seven key dimensions within empowerment. Methods of researching empowerment were finally reviewed, outlining the emergent and qualitative approaches and tools used, and identifying their roots in grounded theory and critical multiplism.

The second critical question asked where empowerment and its current popularity have come from. **PART TWO: THE FOUNDATIONS OF EMPOWERMENT** first sought to map its roots within both philosophical and historical traditions and more recent ideological and political trends. Empowerment was then contextualised within its policy, community and organisational settings, noting elements of interaction with each. Contrasting aims of people-changing and structure-changing were finally outlined, confirming a vital role for shared vision within practice.

Third, the weighty question of how empowerment is practised was addressed by **PART THREE: METHODS OF EMPOWERMENT PRACTICE**. This explored the focus of practice (or rather who is being empowered), language and types of involvement as three different ways of practising empowerment. Most critically, this discussion suggested that diverse practical methods are simply different rather than individually inferior or superior.

PART FOUR: CRITICAL FACTORS IN EMPOWERMENT PRACTICE sought to identify those factors which appear most critical in 'making or breaking' empowerment practice. Three such factors were discussed, namely preconditions of, resources for and barriers to empowerment. Examination of their respective roles and effects suggested that whilst optimal empowerment depends on critical factors being achieved, a degree of empowerment can occur regardless of such conditions being met.

The fifth critical question focused on the links between models of practice and empowerment's conceptualisation. **PART FIVE: CONCEPTUALISING EMPOWERMENT** made this two-way link between what people think and what they do. First the critical distinction between the two forms of process and product was

discussed, noting their different implications for empowerment's methods, speed and definition and measurement. Steps and stages in empowerment were then identified, from personal, social and political development to moving on and possibly reversing empowerment. A range of power relationships were explored, with the five dynamics of giving, giving up, seizing, sharing and awakening power each suggesting different models of power and participants' roles. Finally empowerment was identified in three ways: as feeling powerful (perception), having potential power (capacity) and exercising power (action), emphasising their implications for measurement and evaluation. A central lesson of Part Five was that empowerment practice commonly reflects multiple conceptualisations. Whilst these are often complementary rather than mutually exclusive, conflict can arise when more exclusive approaches are sought and differences are not honestly acknowledged.

This final chapter forms **PART SIX: A NEW CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF EMPOWERMENT**, seeking to answer the sixth, and remaining, question of how to bring these many different conceptualisations of empowerment together in a critical and structured way.

The Need for a New Conceptual Framework

"This magic box of empowerment, ... you don't just take a bit out of it and that's you for life" (SCL Interview).

This research has demonstrated empowerment's richness and diversity by exploring its varied foundations (in Part Two), methods of practice (in Part Three), critical factors (in Part Four) and conceptualisations (in Part Five). This process identified a number of critical empowerment dimensions. Fundamentally these are neither mutually exclusive nor hierarchical, but rather are simply different and interdependent. A conceptual framework was sought which would bring together these dimensions, acknowledging their overarching themes without over-simplifying their differences.

The design of this framework learned much from the limitations of existing theoretical models of empowerment. As outlined earlier,¹ these are restricted first to one-dimensional, multi-level or laddered models, which offer limited flexibility and suffer from hierarchical assumptions that one type of empowerment is unquestionably better than another. Second there are two-dimensional, often tabular, models, which

¹ In (1.1) Empowerment: Definitions and Concepts (Conceptualising Empowerment, pp22-7).

tend to categorise empowerment somewhat simplistically as 'either ... or ...', thereby failing to recognise that practice often simultaneously involves different types. Third there are multi-dimensional models which, whilst at least reflecting some of empowerment's complexity, limit insight by offering a small range of dimensions, and attempting to fit analysis into a single, one-dimensional graphical image, such as a cube or a collection of spheres.

This new conceptual framework alternatively aims to link theory in with practice by being deeply rooted in both; promote exploration rather than measurement of empowerment; encourage structured but flexible critical analysis; suggest that empowerment's different dimensions and themes are simply different rather than individually superior or inferior; and finally use multiple graphical images, rather than simply one.

Constructing the Framework

"I don't have a plan which I carry out, step by step. I move step by step and the design takes shape, with no image of the final form" (Stevens 1970 p118 in Treleaven 1994 p141).

This research followed an emergent design,² and likewise the conceptual framework was gradually developed. An initial trawl of the literature and the preliminary interviews with the general contacts³ identified a number of critical dimensions of empowerment. Amongst those first identified were the seven dimensions of power highlighted following an early review of theories of power. For example this suggested power could be identified as both concrete and relational, and as zero sum or limitless (positive sum), with clear implications for conceptualising empowerment.⁴ Other dimensions of empowerment, such as its multi-layered contexts, its deep historical and ideological roots, and issues around language also became evident at this early stage.

To bring together and help make sense of these emerging and diverse dimensions, they were collated into what was the first version of the conceptual framework. At this stage the framework was no more than a large sheet of A1 paper displaying a

² As outlined in (1.3) Researching Empowerment (Making Methods Choices: Exploration not Evaluation, Emergent Methods, pp37).

³ Their role is discussed in (1.3) Researching Empowerment (Selecting a Sample: Identifying Projects, pp40-2). The general contacts are listed in the Acknowledgements (p6).

⁴ These 7 key dimensions were outlined and discussed in (1.2) Power and Empowerment (pp28-35).

series of lists. Each list was headed by a dimension of empowerment, with key distinctions noted below. This initial framework influenced the focus of the research tools,⁵ with the research questions designed to critically explore existing dimensions in detail, identify practical evidence where possible, and identify entirely new dimensions or angles. Significantly, this meant that the projects and their commentators influentially shaped the emerging framework, and thus rather than comparing their experiences to an ideal model, their own empowerment conceptualisations and practice fed into ongoing theory development.

As the research continued and understanding of empowerment deepened, the early dimensions and their key distinctions were altered, extended or removed. Over time, the organisation of lists became increasingly structured, for example grouping them together into overarching themes. These intermediate versions of the framework were variously influenced by further explorations of the literature, a study visit to Brazil⁶ and, most significantly, extensive fieldwork with the eight Scottish projects.

These eight projects had the most notable influence on the design and content of the conceptual framework. Undoubtedly a framework of sorts could have been constructed following a very detailed reading of the literature alone. However conceptualising empowerment via its practice had a number of distinct advantages. First, empowerment was explored through a unique collection of critically-minded and practically-experienced 'empowerment experts', that is the commentators and other participants who are actually working with (rather than simply talking about) empowerment on a daily basis. Second, empowerment's practical settings highlighted not only the concept's dimensions and distinctions, but more critically its tensions, ambiguities and contradictions. These latter three aspects are those which are often 'tidied away' or simply overlooked by the literature, which more commonly seeks to simplify than exploit empowerment's complexity. Third, and following on from this second point, the diverse practice of empowerment clearly demonstrated that empowerment is often ambiguously 'both ... and ...', rather than always the dichotomous (but theoretically simpler) 'either ... or ...'. Fourth, exploring practice offered a critical test of the usefulness of theory, whereby any dimension's complete irrelevance to practice suggests it is misplaced in any conceptualisation. Fifth and finally, studying empowerment in practice offers a continual stream of rich and insightful 'real life' illustrations (including quotations) which greatly assist understanding and explanation.

⁵ As seen in Appendix Two: Example of an Interview Schedule (pp313-9).

⁶ This was discussed in (2.1) The Roots of Empowerment (Philosophical and Historical Traditions: Paulo Freire and the Brazilian Model, pp62-6).

The final version of the framework was additionally influenced by the processes of analysis and interpretation which followed the fieldwork. By this stage the conceptual framework had emerged into a 'file box' image, whose shape and development is now outlined.

A Guide to the Framework

"Theories are only tools; ... means for organizing data, for making sense of and explaining reality, so that confusion is rendered comprehensible" (Morse 1994b p259).

The conceptual framework takes the form of a 'file box'. This clearly mirrors the structure of this thesis, containing four main sections which represent the four overarching themes of empowerment's foundations (as discussed in Part Two), methods of practice (reviewed in Part Three), critical factors in practice (identified in Part Four) and finally conceptualisations (outlined in Part Five). Each of these thematic sections contains between three and four 'file cards', which in all represent thirteen dimensions of empowerment. These dimensions mirror the thirteen chapters of Parts Two to Five, being identified in turn as Roots, Contexts and Aims (Part Two); Focus, Language and Types of Involvement (Part Three); Preconditions, Resources and Blocks and Barriers (Part Four); and Form, Steps and Stages, Dynamics and Evidence (Part Five).

In the file box diagram, these thirteen dimensions are identified on file card tabs above each themed section heading. Each of these file cards is then illustrated in turn, using one page per card for clarity. As shown in the headings in Figure 10, the relevant dimension is identified on the file cards' tab. Each card begins with a brief 'Summary', explaining why this dimension is critical to empowerment, identifying pertinent issues, and outlining implications for practice. The middle portion of each card lists 'Key Distinctions' within that dimension, such as product and process within Form. Note that these should not be seen as an exhaustive list of distinctions, but rather (as the name suggests) an indication of those which are particularly critical. These distinctions again closely reflect those discussed in each chapter. Finally each card asks a series of 'Critical Questions', thereby promoting detailed exploration of that dimension, rather than simply listing ideal types or categories from which to choose.

Figure 10: Conceptual Framework of Empowerment: File Card Headings

DIMENSION		
Summary	Key Distinctions	Critical Questions

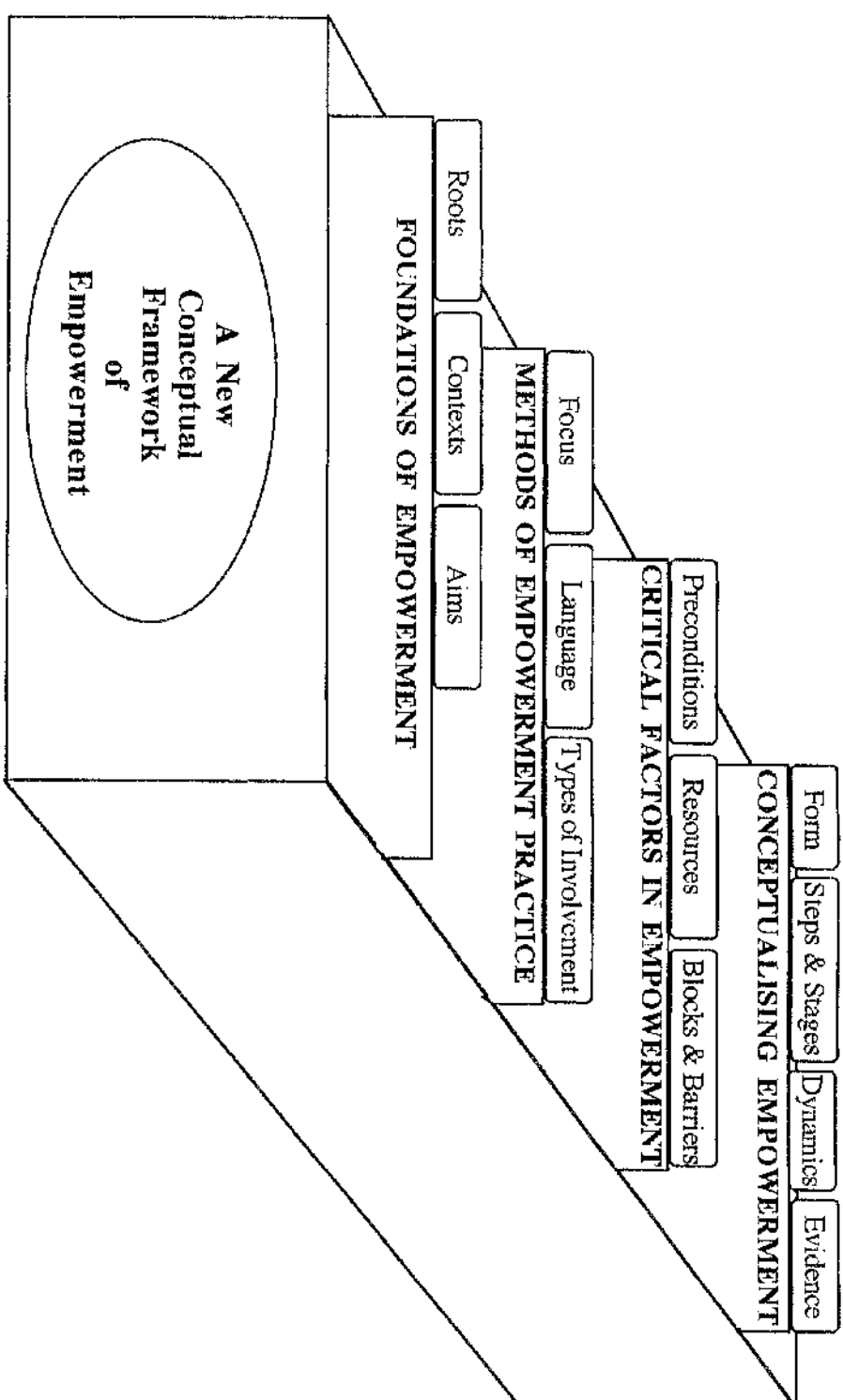
Why a File Box?

The emergence of the file box as the ideal image to represent the conceptual framework only slowly emerged, with the final version being a relatively late development.

The file box was finally chosen for a number of reasons. First, people are familiar with the image of a file box and know how it works. Second, the existence of a single, overarching image simplifies and concretises the complex concept of empowerment to some degree. However third, and linked to this second point, the limitations of other conceptual models, which are represented as single, flat, graphical images, are overcome by the inclusion of the file cards. Thus one can 'look behind' the overarching image for further critical and structured exploration. Fourth, the file box offers both structure, through its themed sections and consistent layout, and flexibility, through offering no set route for exploration. Fifth and finally, the file box recognises and indeed promotes the interaction of empowerment's themes, dimensions and key distinctions. Such interaction is particularly critical to overcome what Simon (1994) identifies as the problematic and limiting tendency to always think in dichotomies (such as individual OR environment, micro OR macro). Similarly Herd's (1995b) ten "golden rules of user involvement" end with a warning that "There are no Right Answers, only different points of view" (p3). The framework reflects these sentiments.

Even after the file box image was chosen, it underwent considerable development to simplify its overall structure to a smaller number of themed sections and fewer, more critical dimensions. However the level of detail on each file card was expanded. Although 'Key Distinctions' were included in the early lists (which as noted earlier preceded the file cards), the 'Summary' and 'Critical Questions' sections were much later additions, respectively offering a necessary level of background information and encouraging more critical exploration of empowerment.

The new conceptual framework of empowerment is now outlined.



THE FOUNDATIONS OF EMPOWERMENT

ROOTS		
Summary	Key Distinctions	Critical Questions
<p><i>Where does empowerment practice come from?</i></p> <p>Roots not only trace the past, but also feed the present and influence ongoing growth and direction. Weak roots can create vulnerability, whilst strong roots can give a solid base but also restrict movement. Roots both influence the rationale for the creation of practice and current direction, and are identifiable both within structures and participants' individual 'baggage'.</p>	<p>Roots:</p> <p>Philosophy</p> <p>History</p> <p>Ideology</p> <p>Politics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What different roots can be identified within empowerment practice? • What influence have they had? • Do they continue to influence practice? In what way?

CONTEXTS

Summary	Key Distinctions	Critical Questions
<p><i>In what setting is empowerment practised?</i></p> <p>Projects and their participants constantly interact with the many contexts which surround them. Contexts can be hostile or welcoming, and their links with practice strong or weak. Although they may simply provide a background or location for empowerment practice, they can have a critical and even defining impact. Empowerment practice does not always passively relate to its context, at times actively aiming for change.</p>	<p>Contexts:</p> <p>Policy</p> <p>Community</p> <p>Organisation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within what contexts is practice taking place? • How does practice interact with each of these? • How far can empowerment practice change its contexts?

AIMS

Summary	Key Distinctions	Critical Questions
<p><i>Why aim for empowerment?</i></p> <p>Empowerment is commonly stated as an aim, but it is often not clear what this means for practice. Two overarching aims of people-changing (transforming individuals) and structure-changing (transforming organisations, cultures and relationships) can be identified. These aims reflect personal and political dimensions of empowerment. Whilst these are contrasting rather than mutually exclusive, conflict can arise when they are not embraced within any shared vision.</p>	<p>Aims:</p> <p>People-changing</p> <p>Structure-changing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is empowerment stated as an aim? • What is practice aiming for? Why? • What impact do these aims have on practice? • What are their strengths and limitations? • Are they embraced in any shared vision of empowerment?

METHODS OF EMPOWERMENT

FOCUS	
Summary	Key Distinctions
<p><i>Who is being empowered?</i></p> <p>Empowerment practice can be variously focused. Commonly different approaches are combined in practice, suggesting they inter-relate rather than being mutually exclusive. However conflict can arise where the primary focus is not universally supported. Particular tensions can be identified here between individualist and collective practice, and consumerist and citizenship approaches to empowerment.</p>	<p>Focus:</p> <p>Individual</p> <p>Family</p> <p>Group</p> <p>Coalition</p> <p>Community</p> <p>Market</p> <p>Wider Society</p>
Critical Questions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How is empowerment practice focused?• How can this be identified in practice?• Why has this approach been chosen?• What are the strengths and limitations of this focus?• Are some approaches seen as particularly critical? Which?• Do different approaches conflict in any way? How?	

LANGUAGE

Summary	Key Distinctions	Critical Questions
<p><i>How is empowerment discussed?</i></p> <p>Although often cast as meaningless rhetoric, empowerment language is commonly perceived and used as a method in itself. Terminology and competing definitions provoke much debate, particularly around the appropriateness of specific language for different speakers and audiences. Whilst at times used interchangeably with other terms, empowerment arguably has distinctive meaning, with its own strengths, limitations and powerful links with ideology.</p>	<p>Language:</p> <p>Terminology</p> <p>Definitions and meanings</p> <p>Speakers and audiences</p> <p>Rhetoric and ideology</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why was the language of empowerment chosen? • Does this terminology affect practice in any way? How? • What advantages and disadvantages does this empowerment language have? • Do different speakers and audiences use the same empowerment language? • What differences can be identified in definitions, meanings and vocabulary? • Does this language embody any particular ideologies? Which?

TYPES OF INVOLVEMENT

Summary	Key Distinctions	Critical Questions
<p><i>How are users involved?</i></p> <p>User involvement is commonly promoted as a method of empowerment. Certain types of involvement, such as representation and management, tend to be perceived as superior to others, however such hierarchies fail to explain why users do not always seek to become involved at the 'highest' levels, or at times experience them as disempowering. This suggests types of involvement are simply different rather than inferior or superior. Overall honesty about what involvement users can expect is more crucial than suggesting only the highest levels are empowering.</p>	<p>Types of Involvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Getting involved Setting the empowerment agenda Implementation/ service delivery Volunteering Becoming paid workers Representation & management Passive/ Non-Involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What types of user involvement can be identified? • Why have these types been chosen as a method of empowerment? • Who decided on these types? • What are the costs and benefits of each? • Are users or other participants resistant to particular types? Which? Why? • What impact does each type have for other participants, such as workers or managers? • Why have some potential users chosen not to become involved in certain ways, or at all?

CRITICAL FACTORS IN EMPOWERMENT PRACTICE

PRECONDITIONS		
Summary	Key Distinctions	Critical Questions
<p><i>What conditions are required for empowerment?</i></p> <p>Preconditions are requirements which have to be met for empowerment to occur. Although easily identified, they appear to have some similarities to barriers, resources and steps and stages in empowerment. Evidence suggests that empowerment can occur to a certain extent without specific preconditions being met, suggesting that optimal, rather than any, empowerment is facilitated in this way.</p>	<p>Preconditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting immediate needs Being receptive to empowerment Starting where people are Tasting power Empowering the empowerers Securing access Establishing leadership, structure and organisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which, if any, conditions are seen as necessary for empowerment to occur? • How do these conditions assist empowerment? • Can practice help achieve any of these conditions? Which? How? • Are there examples of empowerment occurring without these conditions being met? Which? • Did this result in a different type of empowerment than if conditions were met? In what way?

RESOURCES

Summary	Key Distinctions	Critical Questions
<p><i>What does empowerment cost?</i></p> <p>Resources are widely recognised as a critical factor in empowerment practice, with inadequate resourcing a common complaint. Critically, resourcing is not just about money (although this is important), with non-monetary indigenous, human and collective resources all heavily used. Whilst user control over all resources is sought by some, others find this too great a burden, although in general users can find accessing any resources difficult. Whilst resources come from varied sources, powerholders may have a particular interest in buying participants' compliance.</p>	<p>Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Levels Access Control Finance Indigenous resources Human resources Shared resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What resources are used in empowerment practice? • How are these used? • Who decides this? • What resources are lacking? • Why are these unavailable, and what impact does this have? • Who controls and provides these resources? What opportunities and threats do they bring to practice?

BLOCKS AND BARRIERS

Summary	Key Distinctions	Critical Questions
<p><i>What prevents empowerment?</i></p> <p>Both internal and external barriers are commonly identified as limiting empowerment practice. Many are not unique to empowerment, commonly affecting any small-scale, community-based practice. Prospective barriers are rarely identified in advance, yet being forewarned seems to allow for some forearming, unlike the more common hindsight. Failing to address barriers tends to result in their accumulation, rather than disappearance, whilst persistent and seemingly insurmountable barriers appear to wear down participants, rather than spurring on change.</p>	<p>Barriers:</p> <p>Inadequate preparation</p> <p>Internal conflict</p> <p>Burnout</p> <p>Fear of risk taking</p> <p>Competition between initiatives</p> <p>Hostile settings</p> <p>Resistance to change</p> <p>Exclusion</p> <p>Low expectations</p> <p>Tokenism</p> <p>Inequalities of power</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What, if anything, is blocking or slowing down empowerment practice? • Were these predicted in advance? Why (not)? • What effect do these barriers have on practice and its participants? • Are these avoidable? If so, how could they be removed? • What attempts, if any, are made to compensate for barriers? • Do participants perceive barriers in different ways? How does this affect potential solutions?

CONCEPTUALISING EMPOWERMENT

FORM		
Summary	Key Distinctions	Critical Questions
<p><i>What form does empowerment take?</i></p> <p>Empowerment has two pure forms: as a concrete, tangible product and as an ongoing, fluid process. This is a critical distinction, impacting upon the selection of goal- or method-oriented practice, quick fix or slower approaches, and concrete and visible or fluid and shifting measurement and definition. These forms are not mutually exclusive, rather sitting at either end of a continuum. They are commonly seen as interdependent, for example where a successful product depends on a strong process. However conflict can arise where they are not agreed between participants.</p>	<p>Form:</p> <p>Process</p> <p>Product</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which form(s) does empowerment take in practice? • How can this be identified in the model of practice followed? • What are the strengths and weaknesses of this? • How does this influence the speed of practice? • What effect does this have on defining and measuring empowerment? • Do process and product conflict or interact in practice? In what way?

STEPS AND STAGES		
Summary	Key Distinctions	Critical Questions
<p><i>Is empowerment incremental?</i></p> <p>If empowerment is a process, this may embody a series of steps or stages. Likewise, if it is a product, this may be concretised as a step or stage in itself. Steps and stages variously inter-relate, for example linearly, hierarchically or (most classically) cyclically. They tend not to predict mechanistic paths, but rather identify a series of component parts of empowerment. Notably, as well as moving forward, empowerment can be reversed. Such reversal may in fact be unavoidable in empowerment practice, which appears inherently risky.</p>	<p>Steps and Stages:</p> <p>Personal development</p> <p>Social development</p> <p>Political development</p> <p>Moving on/ empowerment transfer</p> <p>Reversal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What steps and stages, if any, can be identified in empowerment practice? • What does each involve? (for example do they contain 'sub-stages'?) • Do these steps assist or impede practice? How? • How do different steps and stages inter-relate? • Are all, or only selected, steps and stages actively sought in practice? Why are they sought? • Are participants stuck at certain stages? How did this happen? Does this matter, and if so, what would restart movement? • Has movement through steps and stages been reversed? Could this have been avoided? How?

DYNAMICS

Summary	Key Distinctions	Critical Questions
<p><i>How does power move in empowerment relations?</i></p> <p>Empowerment involves a range of contrasting power relationships. These dynamics commonly co-exist, with the strongest practice combining several, and thus overcoming the limitations of each. Empowerment dynamics vary in their assumptions about power (e.g. zero sum and limitless; concrete and relational); users' and workers' roles (e.g. active and passive); and relationships between powerholders and the powerless (e.g. consensual and conflictual).</p>	<p>Dynamics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Giving power Giving up power Seizing power Sharing power Awakening power 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What power relations can be identified in empowerment practice? How do these influence the practical approaches taken? What roles do users and workers have within each dynamic? What strengths and weaknesses does each have? Are any particular dynamics resisted by project participants? Who is resisting these? Why?

EVIDENCE

Summary	Key Distinctions	Critical Questions
<p><i>How is empowerment identified in practice?</i></p> <p>Contrary to accusations that it is intangible, empowerment can be variously evidenced. Different types of evidence effectively interact in practice, for example where feeling more powerful encourages the exercise of power. Debate however surrounds whether all evidence equates to empowerment, particularly around how far feeling powerful (perception) or having potential power (capacity) is empowering if power is not actually exercised (action). Different types of evidence have notable implications for empowerment's measurement and evaluation.</p>	<p>Evidence:</p> <p>Perception (feeling powerful)</p> <p>Capacity (having potential power)</p> <p>Action (exercising power)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What evidence of empowerment is sought in practice? • Why is this identified as empowerment? • What are the advantages and disadvantages of classifying this as evidence? • What implications does this evidence have for the methods of empowerment which are followed, including measurement and evaluation?

Conclusion: So What is Empowerment? Lessons for Future Practice and Research

"Empowerment is ... very wrapped up with people's perceptions of themselves and of the world. ... Empowerment is about the lenses that you look at the world and at yourself through" (FCLD Interview).

The file box outlined here effectively concludes this thesis, by drawing together into a new conceptual framework the diverse themes, dimensions and distinctions of empowerment identified throughout. It therefore only remains to identify four lessons for future empowerment practice and research.

First, this research has continually highlighted the impact of perception on expectations of empowerment, and subsequent acceptance or resistance. Fundamentally the proposed conceptual framework suggests there is no such thing as 'genuine' empowerment, as many different models of empowerment exist and have validity. This supports the notion that "empowerment is whatever you want it to be" (Clutterbuck 1995 in Newmark 1995 p4). Notably single, 'all-embracing' definitions cannot possibly reflect the diversity of empowerment theory or practice, yet conversely critical insight and structured understanding cannot be gained by vague description:

"Like knitting, empowering requires an even tension to balance the closeness and the separateness: if the links are too loose, the shape collapses; if they are too tight, the flexibility of the whole diminishes" (Pennell in Simon 1994 p127)

Second, whilst this research has celebrated empowerment's conceptual complexity, a series of very concrete lessons and challenges for practice can also be identified. Overall participants claimed that empowerment practice "really opened my eyes" (SAMH Interview), identifying a "richness of talent" (FCLD Interview), and encouraging people "never to underestimate" (SCL Interview):

"You can actually increase the amount of power that individuals and communities have and that can be effective power. And so things are better in that community because people do what they do, and that is a direct consequence of their actions" (DCHP Interview).

However empowerment practice continues to feel like "swimming against the tide" (Freire in Bruss and Macedo 1985 p13), being commonly slow, often exhausting and suffering from limited opportunity for dissemination or replication. Arguably through empowerment practice "lessons will be learned, but at quite an expensive cost" (EP Interview) for both individual participants and for budgets. Yet as Hess (1984) claims, such difficulties may be inherent in empowerment but they are far from insurmountable:

"Power is not easily given up; compromises are not easily made; inequities continue to exist. However this does not mean that empowerment is an illusion; it just means that we have an extremely long way to go before we understand it to the point where it truly becomes the larger reality" (p230).

Third, whilst this research sought to overcome the limitations of evaluative models of empowerment, the need for evaluation clearly remains within practice. In effect this new conceptual framework offers a different kind of evaluative tool, which shifts evaluative insight away from limited definitions, value judgements or measurements towards exploratory assessments which more adequately reflect empowerment's multi-dimensionality and complexity. More broadly, this framework can also act as a guide for exploratory and qualitative research into empowerment practice (as used in earlier versions for the research discussed in Murray 1995 and Murray 1997).

Fourth and finally, the need for substantial further empowerment research is clear, supporting Cook's (1985) claim that truly multiplist studies should raise new research questions. In particular, new evaluative methods require to be tested, including those using the new conceptual framework as a starting point for more exploratory approaches to measurement and assessment of empowerment's successes and failures. Such future research would result in the continuing development of the framework as new themes and dimensions emerge.

In conclusion, empowerment has proved a fascinating subject for this research. Its richness, rooted in the complexity and diversity of its multiple themes and dimensions, should be celebrated and indeed championed as we continue exploring empowerment.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE: PROJECT SUMMARIES

Over the following pages, each of the the eight Scottish projects involved in this research are summarised.

Each summary outlines the project's name; its location; the dates of its existence; the dates of the interviews carried out for this research; the target group or client group; the project's key aims; funding arrangements; key partners involved in project work; staffing; management arrangements; and key activities. For those projects which are still in existence at September 1998, an update is added at the end of their summary.

In addition, please note the following points:

1. All information listed here refers to the status and activities of projects at the time of the research. (With the exception of the updates as noted above).
2. The dates given relate to the years of funded activity and exclude time spent in initial formation before funding was granted.
3. The local authorities referred to are those which existed pre-local government reorganisation in April 1996.
4. The abbreviations used throughout this thesis are included in brackets after each project's name, along with alternative names where applicable. Note that in all but one case (FCLD), this abbreviation was not used by the project, but has been used for convenience here.

Project Name	DRUMCHAPEL COMMUNITY HEALTH PROJECT (DCHP) (Also known as Drumming Up Health)	
Location	Drumchapel Health Centre, Glasgow (based in local community centre until November 1993)	
Project Dates	June 1990 to present	Interview Dates: September 1995 to November 1995
Target Group	Community of Drumchapel, as well as local health agencies	
Aims	"The project's overall aim is to co-ordinate, resource and support community health activity in Drumchapel in line with the following principles of 'Health for All': EQUITY, EMPOWERMENT, COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION, COLLABORATION, LOCAL PRIMARY HEALTH CARE" (DCHP Document ¹).	
Funding	Until 1992 (pilot phase): Glasgow Healthy City Project, Greater Glasgow Health Board (GGHB) (secondments) and Drumchapel Initiative (pilot phase). From 1992: Urban Aid (via Scottish Office and Glasgow City Council). Urban Aid supervised by Glasgow Healthy City Project. (Also GGHB secondments continued).	
Key Partners	Glasgow Healthy City Project (World Health Organisation), Greater Glasgow Health Board (Health Promotion), Drumchapel Initiative (inter-agency partnership led by Glasgow District and Strathclyde Regional Councils).	
Staff	Co-ordinator (GGHB secondment), Project Health Visitor (Glasgow Community and Mental Health Services NHS Trust secondment), Resource & Development worker, Administrative & Resource assistant, and team of Community Health Volunteers (CHVs).	
Management	Initially Executive Group (strategic - included high level officers and politicians) and Working Group (operational - included local agency workers). Replaced by single Management Group in 1992 (60% local people and 40% officers).	
Key Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promoting community identification of health issues through recruiting and training Community Health Volunteers. • creating self help groups e.g. postnatal depression, men's health, asthma support (Dragon Club for children, Support Group). • co-ordinating local health activity through forums e.g. women's health, HIV and addictions. • campaigning on e.g. food action, damp housing, women's safety. • carrying out research e.g. community health profiling, local surveys (e.g. safety of child play areas, local food pricing). • creating services e.g. Safe Kids Loan Scheme (loans child safety equipment to young families), community health library, One to One counselling and complementary therapies 	

¹ Kennedy, Aine (1994) *Practising 'Health for All' in a Glasgow Housing Scheme: the Drumchapel Healthy Cities Project 1990-92* Appendix I.

Update at Sept. 1998	<p>There were concerns about funding following local government reorganisation in 1996, however Glasgow City Council is now funding the project on an annual basis.</p> <p>There have been significant changes in personnel since the research, with only one of the paid workers and none of the volunteers of that period remaining. The project is now co-ordinated jointly by a health promotion support worker (no longer titled 'project co-ordinator') and a full-time health visitor. A former community health volunteers has just been appointed to the development worker post, ending an extended period where no worker was present (due to extended sick leave). A new volunteer recruitment drive and development programme will shortly be launched to add to the 3 to 4 volunteers currently involved.</p> <p>The asthma support group is still running and has recently begun to influence schools' policy on children with asthma, although the Dragon Club (for children) has ended due to a lack of volunteers. The project is also running a Bereavement Support group (mainly for parents who have lost children), an epilepsy support group, and a postnatal support group (which a local health visitor is now running).</p>
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Project Name	THE EMPOWERMENT PROJECT (EP) (originally Partnerships for Empowerment)	
Location	A long-stay, care of the elderly hospital ward, Glasgow	
Project Dates	November 1992 to February 1995	Interview Dates: September 1994 to January 1995
Target Group	Patients, relatives and staff based in the selected ward (original aim was to cover three wards across Greater Glasgow, but in effect worked in one ward only).	
Aims	"The Partnerships for Empowerment Project aims to improve the quality of life of the elderly patients in long stay hospital wards, by empowering patients, relatives and staff by working with them and increasing the financial and social resources available to them" (EP Document ²).	
Funding	Charity Projects (Funding wing of Comic Relief charity)	
Key Partners	Strathclyde Poverty Alliance (now the Poverty Alliance), Age Concern Scotland, Greater Glasgow Health Board (Care of the Elderly Unit). Steering Group also involved representation from Glasgow University, Strathclyde Region Social Work Department (Welfare Rights) and Strathclyde Elderly Forum.	
Staff	Senior Development Worker, Development Worker, Administrative Assistant (part-time for the last quarter of the project).	
Management	Staff managed by Director of Strathclyde Poverty Alliance. Project managed by monthly Management Committee (operational) and quarterly Steering Group (initially strategic, later more advisory role).	
Key Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increasing choice and decision-making opportunities for patients e.g. introducing patients' handling of own money, and introducing spending opportunities on the ward through a trolley service (selling confectionery, drinks, toiletries etc.), a newspaper delivery service etc. increasing activity and stimulation by developing staff and relative involvement in e.g. organising activities and outings, developing small activity and discussion groups with patients, introducing volunteer visitors' programme. building community links e.g. creating contacts with local schools and voluntary organisations, improving access to local transport. helping to change ward and hospital cultures e.g. running staff training on empowerment, dementia, disability and sensory impairment. working with relatives e.g. creating a relative's support group, offering one-to-one support with relatives. 	

² The Empowerment Project (1992) Job Descriptions.

Project Name	FOUNDATION FOR COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT (FCLD) (incorp. Lothian Community Leadership Fund)³		
Location	Edinburgh city centre.		
Project Dates	1990 to 1997	Interview Dates:	February 1995 to October 1995
Target Group	People living and working in disadvantaged communities in Lothian, particularly those eligible for urban aid funding.		
Aims	"The central aim of the Foundation is to foster and support a process of community-building, particularly in those localities that are most economically and socially disadvantaged. It seeks to do this by working with local activists and leaders, paid development workers and managers of community initiatives to help them substantially improve their overall effectiveness and creativity" (FCLD Document ⁴).		
Funding	For LCLF: Urban Aid (via Scottish Office and Lothian Regional Council). Urban Aid supervised by LRC Community Education department. FCLD funded by management fee from LCLF and additional consultancy work. Aim was to franchise out training packages and leadership fund model, however this was not achieved.		
Key Partners	Lothian Regional Council (Community Education). Also the original Council of Management included representatives from both voluntary and business sectors, and customer base included local voluntary and community organisations.		
Staff	FCLD Director, LCLF Project Manager, LCLF Project Assistant (part-time), network of freelance Trainers.		
Management	LCLF line managed by FCLD Director. FCLD originally managed by Council of Management, but met infrequently and eventually dissolved.		
Key Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> providing alternative forms of training, focusing on 'softer' skills and seeing improved personal effectiveness as a route to greater group and community effectiveness, e.g. courses included psychometric testing, conflict resolution, counselling skills, assertiveness, creativity, group leadership. providing accessible training: courses are heavily subsidised for individuals and groups from urban aid eligible areas. targeting 'change agents' within local communities e.g. managers and workers of community projects, community activists. community capacity building: facilitating the creation of community coalitions and local neighbourhood mediation structures. (This was a lesser developed area of FCLD's work). 		

³ Lothian Community Leadership Fund (LCLF) is the training wing of FCLD and this case study mainly refers to LCLF's training activities but FCLD's philosophies, techniques and ideas. FCLD is therefore the named organisation throughout.

⁴ Foundation for Community Leadership Development (1992) Aims and Philosophical Framework.

Project Name	LOTHIAN COALITION OF DISABLED PEOPLE (LCDP)	
Location	Leith, Edinburgh	
Project Dates	April 1989 to present	Interview Dates: January 1995 to December 1995
Target Group	People with disabilities living in Lothian Region	
Aims	<p>"To be an effective voice for disabled people regardless of disability; To work together in a democratic, representative way to bring about improvements in services and challenge and change the stereotyped images forced on disabled people; To change the way society treats disabled people; To win our rights as citizens" (LCDP Document⁵).</p>	
Funding	Lothian Regional Council (funding and secondments) and Edinburgh, Midlothian, East and West Lothian District Councils.	
Key Partners	Lothian Regional Council, and 'sister' organisations of Lothian Centre for Independent Living, Grapevine Information Project, and Access Ability (educational brokerage project).	
Staff	Co-ordinator, Communications/ Resource Worker (both LRC secondments), Clerical Worker. Also Coalition Members work on a voluntary basis, such as running the local and themed groups and acting as office bearers.	
Management	Staff line managed by Convenor of LCDP. Coalition managed by monthly Executive Committee (policy implementation, finance and staffing), and bi-monthly Council of Management (policy formation). Members of these two groups are elected by full Coalition members.	
Key Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creating a coalition of (not for) disabled people, with full membership and voting rights being restricted to people with disabilities (others can be associate members). • confronting prejudice and changing attitudes e.g. through campaigning and IDEAL disability awareness training group. • influencing local and national policies affecting people with disabilities e.g. by feeding into local government decision-making structures. • running local membership groups (covering each district area), and specialist member groups (focusing on women's issues, visual impairment and hearing impairment). • improving access to information (e.g. through Braille, tape etc.) and to buildings and locations. • campaigning for disability rights in education, employment, transport etc. through political lobbying, rallies and publicity. • creating new services for people with disabilities, such as the 'sister' organisations listed above. 	

⁵ The Lothian Coalition of Disabled People (undated) Information Leaflet.

Update at Sept. 1998	<p>The Coalition has been in a state of financial crisis since local government reorganisation in 1996. Their funding from Lothian Regional Council disappeared with the dissolution of the region, and the Coalition have been refused funding by one of the four new authorities (West Lothian Council). Edinburgh City Council is currently reviewing the Coalition's funding. This situation has meant the Coalition have been restricted in their work, with staff spending most of the time seeking funding, and there have been no new 'spin-off' projects. Grapevine Information Project is also currently under review, whilst Access Ability is also facing financial difficulties. The Coalition have applied for Lottery and other sources of funding, but no substantial awards have yet been made.</p> <p>Three of the four local groups are still going (the exception is West Lothian).</p>
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Project Name	SCOTTISH ASSOCIATION FOR MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCACY AND EMPOWERMENT GROUP (SAMH)	
Location	SAMH Regional Office, Glasgow	
Project Dates	April 1993 to March 1994 (training from Aug 93)	Interview Dates: April 1994 to May 1994
Target Group	Current or former users of mental health services	
Aims	<p><i>"The Purpose of the Group:</i></p> <p>To become knowledgeable in the area of Mental Health, particularly Advocacy; To become skilled in training and presentation; To have knowledge of the requirements of individual groups: user groups and professional groups.</p> <p><i>Aims and Objectives of the Group:</i></p> <p>To take an understanding of Advocacy and its definitions to specific groups; To encourage other 'user' groups to 'speak up for themselves'; To share information with other 'user' groups and individuals; To help organise patient's councils and other such groups; To impart personal experiences and to use these in a positive and challenging way to try to change negative attitudes from professional bodies" (SAMH Document 6).</p>	
Funding	One-off grant to the Scottish Association for Mental Health (SAMH)	
Key Partners	Scottish Association for Mental Health (SAMH)	
Staff	Advocacy Officer	
Management	Direct line management by SAMH Principal Officer for Development (based in Edinburgh) until September 1993, then Regional Manager (West Region) (based in Glasgow).	
Key Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> creating of group of around 8 trainees, all of whom were current or former users of mental health services, with the aim of becoming expert trainers in advocacy and empowerment providing once-weekly training sessions in advocacy, empowerment, personal development, confidence-building, assertiveness, public speaking and presentation skills. delivering training sessions to psychiatric nursing students and local project for people with learning disabilities (this was a key aim of the project - training people as trainers - however time restrictions meant these opportunities were severely limited). developing of specialisms amongst trainees, such as the effects of medication and the politics of the mental health movement. 	

Project Name	SECOND CHANCE LEARNING (SCL)	
Location	Local community centre, Strone, Greenock. Opened additional project base in neighbouring Gibshill in 1993.	
Dates	1987 to present	Interview Dates: April 1995 to October 1995
Target Group	People living in Strone and Gibshill areas of Greenock, particularly those wishing a 'second chance' at education.	
Aims	<p>"1. To attract parents and other adults who are unemployed, or on low incomes and are poorly qualified, into learning situations;</p> <p>2. To provide continuous support and resources to enable participation in activities relevant to their needs, as a family and as potential wage earners;</p> <p>3. To establish local information points which would provide counselling, career and curriculum guidance and educational access;</p> <p>4. To make provision for children to allow family participative learning" (SCL Document⁷).</p>	
Funding	<p>Until 1994: Urban Aid (via Scottish Office & Strathclyde Regional Council). Urban Aid supervised by Community Education.</p> <p>From 1994: SRC Education Department through 100% Category C Scottish Office grant (reviewed annually).</p>	
Key Partners	SRC Community Education department, Strone and Maukenhill Information Education Project (SMIEP) (local community organisation and project founder).	
Staff	Full-time Project Co-ordinator, sessional Community Tutors, other sessional tutors (from James Watt College, the Workers' Educational Association, and community education), Administrator (part-time), sessional Crèche Workers.	
Management	Local management committee consisting of local people and students, and chaired by local education professional. Sub-committees deal with the crèche, finance, personnel and events.	
Key Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing learning in the community by being situated in a local community centre. • offering educational opportunities for parents, assisted by provision of in-house facilities. • offering an alternative approach to learning through informal, one-to-one and group-based learning in an open plan room. • providing employment opportunities for local people through employing residents as workers and tutors. • improving the local qualifications base through offering certificated courses (e.g. Scoilvec, Open Learning, Open University), as well as activity and skills-based learning (e.g. sewing, languages, keep fit, aromatherapy, first aid and cookery). 	

⁷ Hamilton, Edith and Paterson, Margaret (1993) *Second Chance Learning Evaluation*.

Update at Sept. 1998	<p>Second Chance Learning is now funded by Inverclyde Council on an annual basis. The project are also planning to apply for Lottery and European funding.</p> <p>The previous co-ordinator left over a year ago, and one of the community tutors (a former student) has been appointed to this post. There are 7 sessional tutors, now termed 'project workers'. The administrative worker is now tutoring, and a number of the students and former sessional workers have moved on to work or study elsewhere.</p> <p>The project has continued to attract new students and still runs a broad range of classes, including modular, certificated and activity/ skills courses. A creche is provided for all classes, and an arms-length after-school care project is now also running under the umbrella of the project (with its own management committee).</p>
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Project Name	STIRLING WOMEN AND HEALTH PROJECT (SW&H)	
Location	Top of the Town, Stirling.	
Project Dates	January 1989 to March 1997	Interview Dates: March 1995 to October 1995
Target Group	Women living in Stirling District, in particular the urban aid eligible areas of Stirling (Top of the Town, Raploch, Comton and Culterhove).	
Aims	"We aim to improve the health and well-being of women in Stirling District by:- Empowering women to take control over their own health and well being; and Influencing policy and practice at a local level in the health, social and caring services in partnership with local women" (SW&H Document ⁸).	
Funding	Urban Aid (via Scottish Office and Stirling District Council). Supervised initially via SDC Women's Unit (later Equal Opportunities Unit), and latterly SDC's community support service.	
Key Partners	Stirling District Council.	
Staff	Project Co-ordinator, 2 full-time equivalent Community Health Workers, Administrative Assistant (part-time from 1994). Some work carried out by small number of volunteers.	
Management	Management committee of local women and local professionals. All office bearers have been project users (local women) since 1993 (formerly the chair was a local councillor).	
Key Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> enabling women to define their own health needs, including suitable activities for the project and its groups (e.g. local women have encouraged alternative health promotion via outdoor activities, aromatherapy, massage, reflexology and shiatsu). running self help and support groups e.g. for women experiencing depression, mothers of young children, women with eating disorders, young women, girls with special needs, girls in need of additional support. Additional women and health groups are based in local communities. offering one-to-one counselling support. promoting local health through community health days and events. 	

⁸ Stirling Women and Health Project (1993) What is the Stirling Women and Health Project? (information leaflet).

<p>Update at Sept. 1998</p>	<p>When the funding period ended, participants felt this marked the natural end of the women and health project. Some months prior to this a steering group had been set up to plan a new project, the Stirling Health and Wellbeing Alliance. The Coordinator and one of the community health workers moved into this new project, initially on a part-time basis until funding was secured.</p> <p>The Alliance aims to act as a catalyst for health developments, rather than a service provider, however they have secured funding for a three year reminiscence project.</p> <p>They are funded mainly by Stirling Council, but also by Scotia Pharmaceuticals, Stirling Partnership for Urban Regeneration, CRAG and Charity Projects. They are currently seeking funding from Forth Valley Health Board.</p>
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Project Name	STIRLING YOUTH ACTION PROJECT (SYAP)	
Location	Top of the Town, Stirling.	
Project Dates	November 1991 to March 1996	Interview Dates: March 1995 to November 1995
Target Group	Young People (aged 12-18 years) living in Stirling, in particular the urban aid eligible areas of Stirling (Top of the Town, Raploch, Cornon and Culterhove)	
Aims	"The project aims to engage young people from these communities who are most at risk of offending, in action to reduce their involvement in crime and promote positive alternatives through a SOCIAL ACTION APPROACH" (SYAP Document ⁹)	
Funding	Urban Aid (via Scottish Office and Central Regional Council). Urban Aid supervised by CRC Social Work department. Later maintained by Central Regional Council (Community Education) and project dissolved in with mainstream provision in 1996.	
Key Partners	Crime Concern Scotland (until 1994), Central Regional Council, Central Scotland Police	
Staff	Project Director, Administrative Worker (part-time). Supported by sessional community education staff, volunteers and at times students on placement.	
Management	Until April 1994: Project Director line managed by Director of Crime Concern Scotland (for management fee). Project advised by Steering Committee of voluntary and statutory agency representatives, including police, children's panel, psychological services, community education and social work. After April 1994: Management transferred to CRC Community Education service.	
Key Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gathering young people's views e.g. through street-based youth surveys and youth consultations. • promoting a social action approach for young people, and helping them to organise collectively into e.g. forums and action groups. • encouraging young people to see create their own services, such as youth groups, raves and activities programmes. • helping young people to access decision-makers, such as politicians and key officials. • assisting young people to access resources, including money and accommodation. 	

⁹ Stirling Youth Action Project (1993) *Annual Review '93. A Positive Approach to Young People*.

APPENDIX TWO: EXAMPLE OF AN INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

A Note on this Example

The exact content of the interview schedules varied across interviews and projects. This example has been chosen as typical, and was used in interviews with selected Lothian Coalition of Disabled People commentators. For this reason the Coalition, its activities and participants are repeatedly referred to in the text.

The schedule is in note form in places, and does not reflect the conversational nature of the interviews. In the event, all questions listed here were not asked of all commentators. The headings and sub-headings were explained rather than read verbatim, for example section (1) ROOTS was introduced by saying "I'd like to start by looking at the roots of your project, or how it all started", and so on. Many of the sub-headings were written for the researcher to follow the flow of the interview, and were not verbalised. Most underlined headings can therefore be viewed as 'silent', along with text in brackets which acts as either a prompt for the researcher, or represents dimensions of the conceptual framework of empowerment being developed. The prompt cards, each an A4 page handed to commentators during the relevant discussions, are not reproduced to size here, although their contents are boxed within the text.

The preliminary, tentative dimensions of the conceptual framework of empowerment, the final version of which was outlined in Part Five, can be clearly identified in the structure of this schedule.

INTRODUCTION

Reminder of PhD topic: re everyone talking about empowerment but all doing quite different things etc.

From specifics about the Coalition's development to more broad discussions about the nature of empowerment in the Coalition's work.

Should last about an hour.

If anything don't understand, just say.

(1) ROOTS

Motives

Why did you apply for the job with the Coalition? What attracted you to the post?

Early Vision

In the beginning did you have any particular vision of the Coalition - an ideal picture of what it could be like?

Background

Can you tell me a bit about what it was like when the Coalition first started - the early days. Prompt for main influences on early development.

What kind of understanding of empowerment did you have at the start?

Tradition

Has the Coalition been influenced in any way by any tradition of previous disability work? (Lothian, Scotland, UK, abroad)

(2) LANGUAGE

Rationale for Empowerment as Objective

Why does the Coalition have empowerment as an objective?

What effect has it had, having empowerment as an objective?

Definitions

Have there been any debates about the Coalition's name? Prompt for name change.

What about any other language - have there been debates about other key words or terms used by the Coalition?

Was any attempt made to define empowerment within the Coalition? Prompt for how, who, when - or why not?

To what extent was this definition shared and understood?

Have there been any changes in the Coalition's language over time?

How do you feel about using the word empowerment yourself?

(3) ACTORS

Own Role

What role do you see yourself playing in the Coalition?

How does your role differ from other people's?

What influence do you think you have had on the Coalition?

Roles Other People Play

In terms of other people's roles, I don't want you to think about the tasks they do so much as just their overall role or the part or character they play in the Project. Feel free to speak about specific people.

What role have the (prompt card) had in the Coalition?

PROMPT CARD:
Different Roles

Members
Workers
Attached projects
Managers
Steering group
Funders
Founders

Prompt for influence. Prompt for any other significant people.

Who is Empowerment For?

Which of these groups of people are the Coalition's 'target' in terms of the empowerment objective?

In what way are they targeted? Why are they targeted?

(4) ACTIVITIES

Project Summary

How would you describe the Coalition to someone who knew nothing about it?

Development and Operation of Activities

- Local meetings
- Development of Other Project's
- Public relations/ media

For each:

Where did the idea come from?

What was the aim in developing this as an activity?

How has it worked?

Prompt for objective of empowerment.

Prompt also for which areas seen as legitimate and why.

Successful and Unsuccessful Activities

Which of the Coalition's activities would you say had been the most successful?

Why?

And which activities would you say have been the least successful? Why?

(5) INTERVENTION AND FOCUS

Levels of Focus and Intervention

In the Coalition you are working at a number of different levels with people.

At which of these (prompt card) levels of intervention are you working?

In what way are you working at this level?

Prompt for practical examples.

Why are you working at this level?

PROMPT CARD:
Levels of Intervention

Individual/ Person
Family/ Home
Group
Work/ Employment
Community
Market/ Economy
Wider Society
Other

(6) RESOURCES

What would you say the main resources of the Coalition have been (in a broad sense)?
And now, more specifically, I'd like you to look at two different kinds of resources
and tell me in what way they have been used by the Coalition, if at all. Firstly, these
resources:

PROMPT CARD:
Resources (1)

Money/ finance
Knowledge
Skills
Time
Energy and Effort
Human Resources
Professionals
Volunteers

And what about these resources?

PROMPT CARD:
Resources (2)

Networking
Solidarity
Organisation
Mobilisation
Leadership

Prompt for general discussion of these resources: source, how used, level, access etc.

(7) THEMES

Recurring Issues

Have there been any recurring issues or themes in the Project's work?

Prompt for general discussion of role and influence of these themes, whether shared
understanding etc. e.g. choice, access, partnership, advocacy.

(8) STRUCTURES

Accountability

What is the structure of accountability in the Coalition? Who is accountable to who?

How does it work?

Decision-Making

What about the structure of decision-making - who makes decisions?

How does this work?

Representation

What about the structures for representing people?

How does this work?

Information

What about structures for sharing information?

How does this work?

Is information shared? Who holds information?

(9) NATURE OF EMPOWERMENT

Now I'd like to talk in more detail about the kind of empowerment that you feel is relevant to this Project, the form that empowerment takes etc.

Has your view of empowerment changed since the beginning? In what way?

Functions of Empowerment

(i.e. sense/ feeling, potential/ ability, action/ exercise)

What sort of evidence of empowerment would you be looking for in the Coalition?

Can you give me any examples of empowerment in the Coalition?

Specifically what it is about this example that makes it empowering? (For each)

Dynamics of Empowerment

(i.e. gift, development, dynamic, seizure)

What is your role in putting the objective of empowerment into practice?

What role do other people involved with the project have here?

Are there any preconditions for empowerment, that is does anything have to happen before empowerment can happen?

How would you describe an empowering relationship? Can you give me an example of any such relationships in the Coalition?

Aims of Empowerment

(i.e. transformation, integration)

What is the ultimate aim of empowerment in this project?

What would you like to see achieved?

Do you think the Coalition will achieve this? Why (not)?

(10) FORM OF EMPOWERMENT

Highs and Lows and Significant Points

What would you say have been the highs of the Coalition? Why?

What about the low points? Why?

Have there been any other significant points in the Coalition's development to date?

Product vs. Process

Do you see empowerment in the Coalition as a final goal, or as an ongoing process, or as a combination of these?

Why is that? What influence does that have on the Coalition and the way it works?

Prompt for concrete examples.

(If process) In this process of empowerment, can you identify any significant steps or stages on the way?

Which? Where?

Reversal of Empowerment

Do you think there is any ultimate level of empowerment that the Coalition could reach? What?

Do you think the process of empowerment in the Coalition can be reversed or go backwards? Have you witnessed this in the Coalition?

What caused this? What happened?

Transferability

Do you see empowerment as something which is transferable, for example once someone is empowered in one location they are automatically empowered in another?

Prompt for concrete examples re the Coalition.

(11) BLOCKS

Internal Barriers and Limitations

What barriers and limitations within the Coalition have prevented the Coalition achieving all that you wished?

Prompt especially for objective of empowerment.

External Barriers and Limitations

What about barriers and limitations outwith the Coalition?

Prompt especially for objective of empowerment.

Biggest Challenges

What have been the biggest challenges you have faced in this Coalition?

(12) ROLE OF POWER

Power Location

Who would you say has the power in this Coalition?

What makes them powerful?

How do they exercise their power?

Prompt for institutions, organisations and people.

(13) COSTS VS. BENEFITS

Benefits

What would you say have been the main benefits you have gained from your involvement with the Coalition?

And what about benefits others in the Coalition have gained?

Costs

What would you say have been the main costs you have paid for your involvement with the Coalition?

And what about the costs that others in the Coalition have paid?

(14) FUTURE

Lasting Effects: The Seeds Sown

Do you see the Coalition having any lasting impact for the future? What?

Lessons Learned

What would you say have been the main lessons learned from the Coalition?

(15) IMPACT

Collective Impact

What impact would you say this Coalition has had generally?

Prompt for concrete examples.

Individual Impact

What about at an individual level?

Prompt for concrete examples.

FINISH

Thanks for time etc.

Remember to ask re further contacts/ activities for observation.

APPENDIX THREE: REFERENCES

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